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# The Architectural Sculpture of Ivan Meštrović in Relation to Adolf von Hildebrand's *The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts*

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# The Architectural Sculpture of Ivan Meštrović in Relation to Adolf von Hildebrand's *The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts*

**by**

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## Abstract

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This thesis investigates the relationship between the architectural sculpture of Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović and late nineteenth-century aesthetic theory. Most scholarship on Meštrović emphasizes his Croatian heritage and his ties with the Vienna Secessionists and French sculptor Auguste Rodin. While acknowledging that these were important sources for Meštrović, this thesis also seeks to elucidate his shift in style during the first decade of the twentieth century and his continued commitment to clarity of form in his architectural sculpture.

An in-depth look at Meštrović's *Kosovo Pavilion*, *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier* on Mount Avala near Belgrade, Serbia, and wood reliefs at the Kaštelet chapel in Split, Croatia in terms of German sculptor Adolf von Hildebrand's 1893 treatise *The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts* reveals significant parallels between Meštrović's work and Hildebrand's ideas. Despite his widespread recognition and critical acclaim during the first half of the twentieth century, Meštrović has faded from discussions of modern art in much of the United States and Europe. This thesis aims to reintroduce Meštrović,

offering new possibilities for thinking about his work as it relates to the aesthetic theory that was so important for artists of his time.

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# Introduction

In 1911, Ivan Meštrović won first prize in sculpture for his "Kosovo Fragments" at the International Exhibition of Art in Rome. The 28 year-old Croatian sculptor dominated the Serbian Pavilion, his sculpture comprising 74 of the 222 exhibited works.[1] Charles Aitken recalled in 1915 that "Ivan Meštrović's amazing genius was the chief revelation" of the exhibition.[2] This was an achievement for South Slavic artists, who had received little recognition for their creative activities, as modernism there developed relatively late.[3] The painters Nadežda Petrović and Mališa Glišić had produced the "first truly Impressionist achievements" in Serbian art, *Barges on the Sava* and *Tašmajdan* respectively, in 1907.[4]

Though a few sculptors were producing work of note, including Toma Rosandić, who worked closely with Meštrović to create work for the Serbian Pavilion, painting was generally the favored medium in early twentieth-century southeastern Europe, particularly in Serbia and Slovenia.[5] In Croatia, however, artistic interest turned toward the sculpture of Ivan Meštrović as he left for Vienna to study at the Academy of Fine

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[1] Marina Adamović, "'Retrospective' Section in the Serbian Pavilion at the 1911 Universal Exhibition in Rome: An Artistic Cross-Section of the Period" *Balcanica* 27 (1996): 301. Available at http://scindeks.nb.rs/article.aspx?artid=0350-76539627301A&redirect=ft.

[2] Charles Aitken, "Notes—Ivan Meštrović," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 26, No. 144 (Mar. 1915): 260.

[3] A note about geographical, national, and ethnic designations: Meštrović, though Croatian, was a proponent of South Slavic unity, and thus participated on numerous occasions in exhibitions of Serbian art. The press during this time often mistakenly described him as a Serbian artist, likely because this designation was more recognizable to the public. When quoting sources, I will maintain the original terms used. The question of political-geographical designations is also complicated. In Meštrović's lifetime, Croatia was under Austro-Hungarian rule as well as part of Yugoslavia, which was also known at various points as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. I will refer to the general region as "southeastern Europe" and Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Slovenia, Macedonia, and Montenegro collectively in their twentieth-century context as "Yugoslavia." Of course, when referring to one country or nationality, I will use its individual designation.

[4] Adamović, "'Retrospective' Section," 308. See also S.A. Mansbach's *Modern Art in Eastern Europe: From the Baltic to the Balkans, ca. 1890-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) for a general overview of modern art in Southeastern Europe.

[5] S.A. Mansbach, *Modern Art in Eastern Europe*, 207-210, 226-228.

Arts in the Imperial capital.[6] The western European and American public soon followed suit, captivated by the young and mysterious Croat (fig. 1).

During the first decades of the twentieth century, Meštrović was a darling of the art world. Stories about his creative genius graced newspapers across Europe and the United States. Among other distinctions, he was the first artist to have a one-man exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1915. He also was the first living artist to exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1947, and, in 1953, he was awarded the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award of Merit.[7] He taught sculpture at Syracuse University from 1946-1955 and at the University of Notre Dame from 1955 until his death in South Bend, Indiana, in 1962. He also completed several commissions in the United States, including the famed *Indians* (1925), a pair of monumental bronze equestrian statues in Chicago's Grant Park. Since his death, however, Meštrović has largely disappeared from discussions of twentieth-century art, despite such accomplishments and his associations with canonical figures of art history, including Viennese artist Gustav Klimt and French sculptor Auguste Rodin.

Of Meštrović's sources, Croatian art historian Duško Kečkemet has written:

> When we are tempted to look for the origins of the rhythm of movement in the hair of Meštrović's Kossovo [sic] heroes and widows, or in the mane and tail of the huge horse upon which *Kraljević Marko* rode in the influence of the Viennese Secession movement, or in the inspiration got in museums from Assyrian or ancient Greek carvings, we must remember that those same decorative elements and rhythm are found in the horses' manes that Meštrović carved as a boy in his own mountains. The rhythm of the folk songs and folk poetry of his childhood and of the old Romanesque Croatian three-band plaited designs played their part

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[6] That other artists, too, looked to Meštrović is evident in the work of Ljubo Babić, a Croatian paper, and Toma Rosandić. Babić's unusual painting *The Widows* from 1912 and much of the work of Rosandić reveal an interest in Meštrović's style and subject.

[7] Margaret Cresson, "Sculptor's Sculptor," *New York Times*, April 6, 1947, SM22 and "Ivan Meštrović's Legacy at SU," Syracuse University, accessed July 19, 2011, http://archives.syr.edu/exhibits/mestrovic.html.

> too. For those early manes and tails were carved long before Meštrović knew anything about the existence of either Secession or Eastern art.[8]

Indeed, many scholars writing about Meštrović suggest that he somehow absorbed his style from the hills of his youth, and most of the writing about Meštrović identifies his Croatian peasant heritage as a major force at work in his sculpture. Discussions of other sources typically focus on Rodin, with whom Meštrović shared a close friendship, and on the members of the Vienna Secession collectively, who invited Meštrović to exhibit with them while he was a student. Scholars typically suggest that Meštrović's work is the product solely of Rodin's influence, exposure to the Secession, and—most importantly—his Croat nationality.

Though one of Meštrović's first sculptures, *Bosnian on a Horse* (1898) does exhibit characteristics that would become prevalent in his later work, such as the series of wavy lines that comprises the horse's hair, scholarship that emphasizes Meštrović's peasant genius fails to consider more fully the varying stylistic attributes of his work and the numerous factors that contributed to his artistic development (fig. 2). Such scholarship confines him to the narrow role of the peasant prodigy, whose style is informed predominantly by his shepherd roots and not by the greater cultural milieu in which he lived and worked. While Meštrović's connection to his homeland is of course significant, it does not fully explain his artistic explorations of style and technique.

A striking variety of subjects, materials, and styles characterizes Meštrović's oeuvre from his first works produced in Vienna to those from his later years in South Bend. His sculptural works include a number of nudes, an array of portraits and monuments to various political, historical, Biblical, and mythological figures, and

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[8] Duško Kečkemet, *Ivan Meštrović*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1970), n.p.

portraits of his family members. Materials include wood, marble, granite, and bronze. His style also changed over time, drawing from the expressive forms of Rodin, the geometric and ornamental leanings of the Secessionists, the solid neoclassicism of Adolf von Hildebrand, and the modern archaism associated with American sculptor Paul Manship—what Branka Stipančić terms Meštrović's "melancholic art deco."[9]

Writing for *The Burlington Magazine* in 1915, when Meštrović had temporarily relocated to London and was exhibiting work at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Robert Ross was one of the few critics who challenged the popular assertion that Meštrović's art was above all else Croatian. He suggested, instead, that it was more accurately European—though with a unique "personality and power" that added "something entirely his own" to his work. Ross was also one of the few critics writing about Meštrović to deemphasize his ties to Rodin:

> The remarkable portrait of M. Rodin [by Meštrović] has led some critics to see more of the French master's influence than is actually present. The *Widows*, if Rodinesque in motive, have nothing in common with Rodin's handling of the nude in mass or line. They are oddly academic, though just a trifle Pentateuchal in symbolic frankness.[10]

Meštrović met Rodin during his studies in Vienna, and their friendship became a popular topic among critics and in the press. An oft-cited exchange between the two describes Rodin's fawning response to Meštrović's request to watch the French sculptor work: "My dear colleague, what could I teach you? You are the greatest phenomenon

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[9] Branka Stipančić and Ellen Elias-Bursać, "Ivan Meštrović's Melancholic Art Deco," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 17, Yugoslavian Theme Issue (Autumn 1990): 54-59. See Susan Rather, *Archaism, Modernism, and the Art of Paul Manship* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993) for a discussion of modern archaism and the work of Paul Manship.
[10] Robert Ross, "Meštrović," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 27, No. 149 (Aug 1915): 206.

among sculptors!"[11] After Rodin's death, the *New York Times* published an article that proclaimed, "Rodin Leaves Pupil to Continue in His Steps: Ivan Meštrović, Young Serbian Sculptor, Is Authoritative Leader of New School of Sculpture."[12] Much of Meštrović's early work in Vienna and some sculpture created during the last years of his life reveal his deep admiration for the French sculptor. But curiously, at about the time Meštrović relocated to Paris in 1907 to work more closely with Rodin, his work began to solidify, becoming less indebted to the effects of modeling and more solid in composition, form, and material. As Ross notes, these sculptures lean toward classicism and have little—if anything—in common with the nudes of Rodin. My thesis aims to investigate this significant shift in style and proposes that late nineteenth-century aesthetic theory, specifically Adolf von Hildebrand's treatise *The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts*, was central to Meštrović's artistic development and contributed significantly to his sculpture and architectural projects.

[11] Maria Meštrović, *Ivan Meštrović: The Making of a Master*, ed. Marcus Tanner (London: Stacey International, 2008), 50.
[12] E.O. Hoppe, "Rodin Leaves Pupil to Continue in His Steps: Ivan Meštrović, Young Serbian Sculptor, Is Authoritative Leader of New School of Sculpture," *New York Times*, Nov. 25, 1917, SM7.

## Meštrović's Youth in Otavice and Split

Ivan Meštrović's legendary childhood, spent tending sheep in the Dalmatian mountains, was a favorite subject of critics and scholars writing about the strength and primitivism of his art and seeking comparisons with recognizable, canonical figures. "He began life as a shepherd boy, actually repeating the legendary life of Giotto and other Italian sculptors," wrote Aitken for the *Burlington Magazine* in 1915. "He is said to have begun by carving the spindles of the peasant women, imitating his father's wood-carvings."[13]

Much to the delight of the sensation-loving public, Meštrović's life literally began in the fields. His parents, Mate and Marta Meštrović, had traveled to Vrpolje from their hometown of Otavice in the Dalmatian Zagora (the inland region of Dalmatia) to work in Slavonia's more fertile fields, and at the time of his birth were living in an abandoned railway carriage. On August 15, 1883, Marta accompanied other women to the fields to finish the harvest, where she went into labor. The other women cleared a space for her in the field, lining it with leaves and rags, and out of modesty left her to give birth on her own. Shortly after Ivan was born, the family returned to Otavice, where he grew up clearing rocky fields and tending sheep on Mount Svilaja.[14]

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[13] Aitken, "Notes—Ivan Meštrović," 260. The comparison to Giotto was a popular one, appearing in numerous articles about Meštrović, including "Ivan Meštrović," *The Yugoslav Review* (April 1924): 5 and Harold Temperley, "Meštrović Puts Wilson Ideas into Medal: Intensity of Serbian Sculptor Revealed in His Work," *The New York Times Magazine*, (Jan. 18, 1925): 13.

[14] All biographical information, unless otherwise noted, is from Maria Meštrović, *Ivan* Meštrović Though I have found Maria Meštrović's account to be most helpful and detailed, other useful biographies include Laurence Schmeckebier, *Ivan Meštrović, Sculptor and Patriot* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1959) and Duško Kečkemet, *Ivan Meštrović* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1970).

There were no schools in Otavice and the surrounding region, so Meštrović received an education comprised of folktales and oral family history. Ivan's great-great-great-grandfather had aided bands of celebrated guerilla fighters, *hajduks*, who had defended their settlements from the Turks, as did his great-great grandfather. His grandfather, Ivan, was the last *hajduk* of the region. These tales of family fame were told alongside epic poetry detailing the feats of King Tvrtko, king of Bosnia, and Zvonimir, the last Croatian king. Meštrović's uncle, Marko Gabrić, was literate, and he taught Ivan how to read newspapers brought from Zadar and Šibenik as well as the two books in the Meštrović household: the New Testament and the poems of a Franciscan monk. It was this informal education, comprised of Biblical tales and national history, that would provide the subjects for most of Meštrović's artistic work.

Mate Meštrović, who dabbled in decorative sculpture, encouraged young Ivan to carve, and by the age of eight he was producing figurative sculptures, including a reproduction of a crucifix he had seen in a calendar at a nearby church. Its lifelike quality stunned his family, and as news of his abilities spread, he began receiving local commissions. Meštrović's daughter Maria Meštrović credits Nikola Adija, a young man whose family owned a restaurant in Drniš, with the formal "discovery" of Meštrović. After seeing several of young Meštrović's sculptures, Adija sent him to study with the well-known stonecutter Pavle Bilinić in Split. There, Meštrović also received drawing lessons from Bilinić's wife, Regina Vechietti, the daughter of a Florentine architect.

In Bilinić's workshop, Meštrović quickly demonstrated his talent for both modeling in clay and carving stone. Allegedly, Meštrović watched a carver fashion an angel for the left side of an altar out of high-quality stone from Brac, and then asked

Bilinić if he could carve the other angel of the pair. At first, Bilinić refused, but after Regina interceded on Meštrović's behalf, the young sculptor created an angel of the same proportions of the first, "without using machines or precision instruments."[15]

[15] Meštrović, *Ivan Meštrović*, 24-25.

## Meštrović in Vienna

Word quickly spread that Meštrović carved in stone directly. Such a remarkable skill prompted Alexander König, an Austrian mine owner, to pay for Meštrović's schooling at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna; he also paid for his room and board with Sycora, a Czech man who lived in a small, one-room house with his wife and two sons. Sycora's kindness and persistence was instrumental for Meštrović's success in Vienna; he secured for Meštrović an apprenticeship with Otto König, a former professor at the School for Applied Arts, to prepare him for admission to the Academy. Meštrović's work had so impressed the director of the Academy, Austrian sculptor Edmund Hellmer, that he wanted to permit Meštrović to bypass the exams and enter the Academy immediately, but faculty opposition required Meštrović to take the exams. In preparation, Meštrović, studied German, literature, history, and geometry while completing lessons with Otto König.[16]

Meštrović was officially admitted to the Academy in the fall of 1901, returning every afternoon after morning classes to work closely with Hellmer. Around this time, Alexander König sold his mines and stopped paying for Meštrović's education. The young artist began selling his own drawings to support himself. The sale of his first self-portrait, from 1902, provided Meštrović with enough money for clay to copy Greek sculptures at the Glyptothek, where he spent much of his time outside of the classroom. The Glyptothek, a teaching collection at the Academy of Fine Arts, housed some 450 plaster casts of famous statues, including the *Winged Victory* of Samothrace and

[16] Ibid., 30.

Michelangelo's *Pietà*, and was likely the setting for Meštrović's first encounters with Greek sculpture and the work of Michelangelo.[17]

While in Vienna, Meštrović became associated with the Secessionists. The establishment of the Secession (officially the Vereinigung bildender Künstler Österreichs, or Union of Austrian Fine Artists) occurred in 1897 when several members of the increasingly conservative Künstlerhausgenossenschaft, or Society of Fine Artists, formed their own group. The painter Gustav Klimt served as the first president of the group, and other prominent artists, designers, and architects, including Otto Wagner, soon joined. Together, they advocated greater involvement with the international art world and the advancement of modernism.[18]

Meštrović first exhibited with the Secessionists in 1902, and he officially joined the group the following year.[19] He shared a studio with Klimt and became a friend of Wagner, who at the time chaired one of the master schools of architecture at the Academy. Though Meštrović did not officially enroll in Wagner's architecture classes, their friendship is evidenced by a gift from Wagner to Meštrović of a personally inscribed project plan.[20] In 1899, the year before Meštrović arrived in Vienna, Wagner had completed the Majolikahaus, an apartment building at 40 Linke Wienzeile in Vienna that typifies the decorative character associated with turn-of-the-century Secession

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[17] "Glyptothek der Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien," Bundesdenkmalamt, accessed July 20, 2011, http://www.bda.at/text/136/1481/9584/ and "Profil und Geschichte der Glyptothek," Akadamie der bildenden Künste Wien, accessed July 20, 2011, http://www.akbild.ac.at/Portal/einrichtungen/gemaldegalerie/museumsordnung.

[18] Debra Schafter, *The Order of Ornament, The Structure of Style: Theoretical Foundations of Modern Art and Architecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 8-9 and Christopher Long, "The Viennese Secessionstil and Modern American Design," *Studies in the Decorative* Arts 14, No. 2 (Spring-Summer 2007), 7-8.

[19] Meštrović, *Ivan Meštrović*, 35.

[20] Irena Kraševac, "Ivan Meštrović–rano razdoblje: Prilog istraživanju kiparevog školovanja u Beču," *Radovi Institut za povijest umjetnosti* 23 (1999): 185.

architecture. Colorful majolica, featuring a complex, symmetrical design of vines and blossoms, covers the façade of the building. Though decorative, the façade lacks three-dimensional ornamentation—Wagner was interested instead in emphasizing the two-dimensional planarity of the façade.[21] By 1910, Wagner had moved away from elaborate facades, embracing instead purer, simpler forms and developing a functionalist aesthetic.[22]

Meštrović, however, would have been familiar with Wagner's more decorative projects in Vienna, such as the Kirche St. Leopold am Steinhof (1902-07) (fig. 3). The Kirche St. Leopold consists of a Greek cross plan surmounted by a gilded dome. Just below the cornice, a decorative frieze features alternating wreaths and crosses. Four angels top columns at the entrance of the church. As Debra Schafter has noted, their sickle-shaped wings are evocative of the guardian creatures of ancient Near Eastern palace sculpture.[23] Meštrović would also begin to draw from Near Eastern sources, incorporating elements of Assyrian sculpture in his own work.

Friedrich Ohmann chaired the other master school of architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts beginning in 1904. Though he was a friend of Wagner, Meštrović officially studied under Ohmann, who was interested in adapting historical styles and updating the baroque.[24] He hoped to align the Secession with the ornamental neo-baroque architecture

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[21] For a discussion of how this design communicates the idea of "enclosure" through its emphasis on planarity, see Schafter, *The Order of Ornament*, 118-120. See also Ákos Moravánsky, *Competing Visions: Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture, 1867-1918* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1998), 152 for a discussion of the Majolikahaus.

[22] Christopher Long in conversation with the author, July 12, 2011.

[23] Schafter, *The Order of Ornament*, 114.

[24] Meštrović was assumed by many to have officially studied with Wagner. Kraševac counters this in "Ivan Meštrović–rano razdoblje." Further, in a personal email with the author on July 5, 2011, Ferdinand Gutschi of the University Archives of the Academy of Fine Arts confirmed Meštrović's enrollment in Ohmann's school, as documented in "Exzerpt aus den Schülerbögen Nrn. 319 N and 2616."

of late nineteenth-century and create a new sculptural language.[25] Accordingly, his students focused on façade studies that feature sculptural ornamentation.[26]

That Ohmann allowed Meštrović into his school is exceptional; it appears to be the only time in history that a student who had not completed the required secondary school exam was allowed to study architecture at the Academy. This might account for Meštrović's completing only two as opposed to the full three years of the architecture course in addition to the three-year sculpture course. Though the exact circumstances for such an arrangement remain unknown, Christopher Long suggests that Ohmann allowed Meštrović into his classes because he was interested in what Meštrović could do with sculpture.[27]

While Meštrović was in Vienna, Ohmann was designing the *Palmenhaus* (1899-1906) for the garden of the Royal Castle (fig. 4). The *Palmenhaus* demonstrates Ohmann's synthesizing of baroque and Secessionist elements, and, as Moravánsky notes, his interest in combining materials. The neo-baroque porticoes, featuring decorative ionic columns and ornamental sculpture, are constructed of stone, while the main hall consists of curving iron and glass.[28]

Meštrović's involvement with the Secessionists also introduced him to the work of Rodin. Rodin had developed ties with the Secessionists in 1898, when, in a move to position modern Austrian art in the context of international art, they invited him to

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[25] Christopher Long in discussion with the author, July 12, 2011. See also Moravánsky, *Competing Visions*, 112-117 for a discussion of Ohmann's interest in reinterpreting the baroque.

[26] For studies by Ohmann's students, see Oskar Wlach, ed. *Arbeiten aus der Ohmann-Schule (1907-1909): Spezialschule für Architektur des Herrn Oberbaurat F. Ohmann an der K. K. Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Wien* (Vienna: Verlag Anton Scholl, 1909).

[27] Christopher Long in discussion with the author, July 12, 2011.

[28] Secession architecture drew from French art nouveau among other stylistic sources. The *Palmenhaus* resembles in particular the metro entrances at Porte Dauphin and Abesses, designed by Hector Guimard at the turn of the nineteenth-century.

exhibit at their first exhibition.[29] Rodin was particularly attractive to the Secessionists not only for his international fame, but also because his provocative work had caused much controversy and debate. Rodin rejected the academic neoclassicism that dominated nineteenth-century sculptural production. Instead, he preferred to investigate the expressiveness of the human body and insisted upon working from live models, adapting his work as the models themselves moved and changed.[30] He criticized his contemporaries for studying plaster casts of ancient sculptures, believing that working with models offered a more direct experience with the human form.[31] He unhesitatingly exploited the malleability of clay, modeling highly textured surfaces and contorted figures, often improvising as he worked.[32] *The Gates of Hell*, commissioned in 1880 for the proposed Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris, effectively illustrates Rodin's approach (fig. 5). For *The Gates*, Rodin employed varying degrees of relief, modeling individual figures partially in low relief and partially in high relief so that they swell up and project from the background. Pronounced shadows cast by areas of high relief

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[29] Rodin had exhibited in Vienna prior to his involvement with the Secessionists, as well. In 1873 at the Universal Exposition, he exhibited unknown terracotta models, at the Künstlerhaus in 1882 he exhibited *The Age of Bronze* and *John the Baptist*, and in 1898 he exhibited at the Jubilee Exhibition. See Dietrun Otten, "Rodin in Vienna," in *Rodin and Vienna*, eds. Agnes Husslein-Arco and Stephan Koja, (Vienna: Belvedere, 2010), 11-12.

[30] The model for his sculpture of *Eve*, for instance, was pregnant—though Rodin did not realize it at first. He recounts seeing her body change (without knowing why) and altering his sculpture accordingly. See Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, "The Figure of *Eve*," in *Rodin in Vienna*, ed. Husslein-Arco and Koja, 68-70.

[31] Albert E. Elsen, *The Gates of Hell by August Rodin* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 67.

[32] Camille Mauclair described Rodin's improvisational approach: ". . .[H]e is continually putting in little figures which replace others; there, plastered into the niches left by unfinished figures, he places everything that he improvises. . . . He will be forever improvising some little figure, and this he plants in his door, studies it against the other figures, then takes it out again, and, if need be, breaks it up and uses the fragments for other attempts." Camille Mauclair, *Auguste Rodin: The Man—His Ideas—His Works*, trans. Clementina Black (London: Duckworth and Co., 1905), 22-24.

heighten this undulating effect.[33] In fact, Rodin intended the reliefs to be illuminated from beneath to heighten the sense of movement created by dramatic light and shadow.[34]

In 1899, the Secessionists bought a plaster cast of Rodin's *Bust of Henri Rochefort* to launch the establishment of a modern sculpture collection, and in 1901, Rodin joined the Secessionists again for their ninth exhibition, which showcased the work of just three artists: Italian painter Giovanni Segantini, German artist Max Klinger, and Rodin.[35] Among the fourteen sculptures Rodin sent were *The Burghers of Calais*, *The Age of Bronze*, and *Eve*.[36] Meštrović admired Rodin's work, and in 1904, they met for the first time in the Glyptotek, which Rodin liked to visit everyday to "admire yet again" the casts of figures from the Aegina temple pediment.[37] As Meštrović did not yet know French, the Czech artist Alphonse Mucha, who spent time in Paris, acted as interpreter. Rodin was impressed with Meštrović and invited him to Paris, an invitation he would accept just a few years later.[38]

Many of Meštrović's early works, created just after his meeting with Rodin, reveal his admiration for the technique of the French sculptor. One such example is *The Well of Life* from 1905 (fig. 6). The City of Zagreb bought the sculpture in 1910, and in 1912 had it cast in bronze and placed it in front of the Croatian National Theater in Zagreb, not far from the main building of the University of Zagreb. A plaster cast of the

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[33] For an in-depth discussion of Rodin's approach to *The Gates of Hell*, see Elsen, *The Gates of Hell*, 67-121.
[34] Ibid., 111.
[35] Agnes Husslein-Arco, "Forward," in *Rodin and Vienna*, 9, and Otten, "Rodin in Vienna," 14.
[36] Otten, "Rodin in Vienna, 14-15. By 1905, the Secessionists had invited Rodin to exhibit with them five times. Occasionally, he sent up to twenty works to be exhibited. After the 1901 exhibition, however, he supplied fewer artworks, though he remained involved with the Secessionists until at least 1908. See Otten, "Rodin in Vienna," 13.
[37] Josef Engelhart, *Ein Wiener Maler erzält*, (Vienna, W. Anderman, 1943), 84. English translation after Stephan Koja and Sylvia Mraz, "Rodin's Impact on Austrian Art," in *Rodin and Vienna*, eds. Agnes Husslein-Arco and Stephan Koja, 153.
[38] Meštrović, *Ivan Meštrović*, 36.

sculpture was prominently displayed in the 1906 Secession exhibition (fig. 7). Several figures gather around the circular well, languidly draping their limbs over each other and the rim of the well. One male figure crouches at the well's base while turning at the waist to face his female companion. Their contorted postures recall Rodin's *Crouching Woman* (1880-82), who unnaturally rests her head on her knee while bending her arm and grasping her ankle (fig. 8). Further, Mestrovic's approach to relief in the *Well of Life* is indebted to that of Rodin. As in *The Gates of Hell*, there is much contrast between areas of high and low relief, creating areas of deep recession between figures.

Karl Wittgenstein, a wealthy mine owner, wanted to purchase *The Well of Life*, but Meštrović preferred that Zagreb acquire it. As a compromise, Meštrović created another version of the well for the Wittgenstein palace.[39] Wittgenstein was so pleased with the commission that he purchased two more works from Meštrović and commissioned a portrait of his wife. The income from these sales allowed Meštrović and his first wife Ruža Klein to travel internationally.

[39] The town of Drniš, Croatia, acquired this version of *The Fountain of Life* after the demolition of the Wittgenstein palace some sixty years later. See Ibid., 47.

## Meštrović in Paris and Rome: A Shift in Style

After Meštrović left the Academy in 1906 he and Ruža traveled together to Paris and Rome. A trip to Paris, in addition to providing an opportunity for Meštrović to visit Rodin's studio, would also make for a valuable study trip. At the Louvre, he would have the opportunity to view Assyrian sculpture, which had been excavated in 1843-44 by Paul Emile Botta, and several examples of archaic Greek art.[40] He would have also seen Michelangelo's *Dying Slave* and *Rebellious Slave*, and in Rome, Michelangelo's other four *Slaves*, all unfinished works of sculpture (fig. 9). These would have a significant effect on his work and became his favorite of Michelangelo's sculptures. Maria Meštrović writes, "Michelangelo was the great attraction for him in Italy, as Ivan considered *The Slaves* the Florentine's masterpiece. I remember watching him contemplate this sculpture and observing his regret at being unable to touch it."[41]

*Girl Singing* (1906), a portrait of Meštrović's future sister-in-law Olga Klein, illustrates the beginnings of a shift in approach (fig. 10).[42] At this time, Meštrović was primarily working in clay, a much more affordable material than stone, and his continued interest in the maleable nature of clay is evident in the molded contours of Olga's hair and clothing. However, the surface of the sculpture demonstrates an interest in the smoothness of Greek sculpture rather than the more textured modeling of Rodin.

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[40] C.J. Gadd, *The Stones of Assyria: The Surviving Remains of Assyrian Sculpture, Their Recovery, and Their Original Positions* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1936), 15-18. Schafter notes that the discovery of Assyrian sculpture in the 1840s by both Botta and British archeologist Henry Layard had a significant effect on limited ideas about the architecture and sculptural production of ancient civilizations. See Schafter, *The Order of Ornament*, 33.

[41] Meštrović, *Ivan Meštrović*, 48.

[42] The plaster cast for this sculpture was shown in the Spring 1906 Vienna Secession exhibition. It was cast in bronze in 1970.

Though Meštrović moved to Paris in 1907 at the suggestion of Rodin and the two maintained their friendship, Meštrović's style and approach continued to shift away from that of the French sculptor. In Paris, Meštrović began work on his monumental *Kosovo Temple*, an architectural complex that incorporated numerous sculptures illustrating key figures from epic poems describing the Battle of Kosovo, in which the Serbian army had been defeated by the Turks in 1389. For this project, Meštrović worked increasingly in stone. *Widow*, a marble sculpture from 1908, illustrates his evolving notions of style and form (fig. 11). The female figure seems to emerge from the stone base upon which she sits, like Michelangelo's unfinished *Slaves*. One of her legs is completely freed from the stone, but of her other leg only a rounded knee protrudes from the stone block. While the freed knee is smooth and finished, the emerging knee reveals the sculptor's process through textured tool marks, mimicking the effect of an unfinished sculpture. The stylized and parallel waves of her hair indicate Meštrović's interest in the repeating patterns of Assyrian relief, and her idealized features are reminiscent of Greek sculpture.[43] *Widow* is solid, compact, and clearly formed rather than contorted and exaggerated.

This shift in Meštrović's work is not subtle. The recently rediscovered Czech futurist painter Ružena Zátková, whom Meštrović met in 1911 in Rome, responded to the marked differences between the work of Meštrović and that of Rodin and illustrated them in a telling sketch. "Meštrović" is a series of concentric squares, while "Rodin" is a scribbled, sculptural form (fig. 12). Zátková's sketch is theoretical, illustrating not the actual appearance of Mestrovic's work, but rather its geometric substructure. The sketch

[43] See, for example, the Louvre's marble *Funerary Bust* from Cyrene, circa 350 BC.

succinctly captures a stylistic difference that marked a particular moment during the first decade of the twentieth century when several artists were moving to clarify and stabilize form. To do so, they looked to archaic Greek sculpture as well as to art from Egypt and Assyria.

In her scholarship on the art of Paul Manship, Susan Rather traces the development of modern archaism. Archaeological excavations in the nineteenth-century at Aegina, Olympia, Athens, and Delphi had produced several examples of pre-classical Greek art, among them the late-archaic Aegina temple pediment sculptures discovered in 1811 and installed at the Glyptothek in Munich in 1828 (fig. 13).[44] Scholars began to identify archaic art as planar, frontal, linear, and stylized, as opposed to the naturalism of classical Greek sculpture. In *The Rendering of Nature in Early Greek Art* (1907), Emmanuel Löwy listed several "peculiarities" of archaic Greek art, including stylization of forms, emphasis on outline or silhouette, and depiction of the broadest part of figures.[45] "Archaic" eventually encompassed the art of Egypt, Romanesque Europe, Byzantium, and India as well as that of archaic Greece, and by 1930, archaic art was understood as "any youthful, vigorous art which is self reliant and not too cultivated."[46] The authors of this definition, Duncan Phillips and Charles Law Watkins, also noted the architectonic character of archaic art: "Archaic art is apt to be sculpture and architecture . . . [I]ts artistic expression in any medium is usually ennobled with a builder's conscience

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[44] Rather, *Archaism*, 43.

[45] Emmanuel Löwy, *The Rendering of Nature in Early Greek Art*, trans. John Fothergill (London: Duckworth & Co., 1907), 5-6. See also Rather, *Archaism*, 49.

[46] Duncan Phillips and Charles Law Watkins, "Terms we Use in Art Criticism," *Art and Understanding* I, No. 2 (March 1930): 166. Quoted also in Rather, *Archaism*, 5. Rather explains that the art of Egypt, Romanesque Europe, Byzantium, Persia, India, and Cambodia had been understood as "primitive" in the nineteenth century, but after increased interest in artifacts from the "even more primitive cultures of Africa and Oceania" in 1900, art formerly designated as "primitive" was termed "archaic" instead. See Rather, *Archaism*, 3-4.

for sound structure which adapts form to function, which seeks the underlying character of a motive with a fine simplicity. . . ."[47]

Rather argues that early twentieth-century artists such as Manship, Karl Bitter, and Meštrović saw the "simplicity" of archaic art as a freeing alternative to expressionism: "After the emotional excesses of late-nineteenth-century sculpture, including that of Rodin, they sought a finer attunement. . . . Archaism in the work of early modern sculptors must be understood as expressing a yearning for emotional, as well as formal, restraint and simplicity."[48]

[47] Rather, *Archaism*, 166.
[48] Ibid., 58.

## Adolf von Hildebrand's *The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts*

Many of the ideas of modern artists interested in archaic art are indebted to Adolf von Hildebrand, whose book *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* [*The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts*] stressed the necessity of clarifying form and the merits of direct carving in stone as an alternative to Rodin's technique of modeling in clay. For artists concerned with stability, clarity, and restraint as it relates to sculpture, Hildebrand, himself a sculptor, served as a powerful theoretical ally. Though much of his treatise drew upon his own experiences as a sculptor, his ideas were also indebted to aesthetic discussions of form presented by other nineteenth-century German theorists, who were either concerned with pure form apart from content or with the subjective implications of aesthetic viewing.[49]

Among those who elaborated on the subjectivity of viewing were Friedrich Vischer and his son Robert, who introduced the idea of "empathy" or, literally, "feeling-in" as it relates to the experience of viewing art. Distinguishing between sensation and feeling and the perceptive modes of seeing, scanning, and a higher form of seeing that involves the imagination, Robert Vischer argued that forms are pleasing not for their mathematical values but for the emotive responses they elicit. Vischer introduced more explicitly the question of what the viewer brings to the work of art in terms of emotive response.

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[49] This theoretical split resulted from Immanuel Kant's discussion of content and its relation to form and his suggestion that content should not interfere with formal aesthetic judgment, but also that ideal beauty result from harmony between form and content. This paradox guided the development of subsequent theories, with theorists typically divided into formalist and sensualist camps. On the developments and major aesthetic concerns of eighteenth and nineteenth-century German theorists see Harry F. Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, eds., "Introduction," in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893* (Santa Monica: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994) and Ernest K. Mundt, "Three Aspects of German Aesthetic Theory," *The Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism* 17, No. 3 (1959): 287-290.

Johann Friedrich Herbart advanced formalist aesthetics, deeming content unnecessary to aesthetic viewing and suggesting that indifference, albeit accompanied by psychological activity, created the best condition for aesthetic contemplation. Scholars generally align Hildebrand with the "Herbartian camp," primarily because of his friendship with Konrad Fiedler, who discussed visibility and modes of experience apart from feeling.[50]

Indeed, Fiedler and Hildebrand were close friends and often shared ideas for their respective theoretical texts; from 1881, for example, Hildebrand shared drafts for *The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts* with Fiedler.[51] However, though Fiedler's ideas can be found in Hildebrand's writings, particularly in his discussions of modes of seeing and the ideal condition of viewing at a distance, Hildebrand was neither a pure formalist nor a sensualist. Instead, he transcends the aesthetic divide, allowing him to produce a theory of form as it relates to perception and practice without denying emotive responses to works of art. *The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts* is a formalist text with sensualist undertones. While it gives primacy to pure form, it acknowledges a certain sensitivity required when making or viewing art, as well as the intensifying power of recognizable objects in nature.[52]

Throughout *The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts*, Hildebrand calls for a stabilizing of form.[53] He announces that the purpose of the treatise, which he derives

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[50] Mundt, "Three Aspects of German Aesthetic Theory," 296.

[51] Mallgrave and Ikonomou, eds., *Empathy, Form, and Space*, 35.

[52] Mallgrave and Ikonomou note as well Hildebrand's willingness "to go beyond Fiedler's strictly formalist position and draw upon the contemporary theories of empathy," as opposed to Ernest K. Mundt, who introduces Hildebrand as a "formalist sculptor." See Ibid., 37.

[53] In my reading of *The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts,* I referred to two different English translations: Adolf von Hildebrand, "The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts" in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, ed. and trans. Mallgrave and Ikonomou, 227-271 and Adolf Hildebrand,

from his own experiences as an artist, is to discuss the "need for a clear expression of space and form . . . [that] leads the artist to a specific idea of form."[54] Hildebrand presents several ideas for how to provide this clear visual image, beginning with a discussion of perception and the two modes of seeing: the visual and the kinesthetic. The visual mode of seeing is akin to viewing at a distance. The eye is at rest, and the viewer easily sees the entire object (or the "visual impression"). As the viewer moves closer to the object, however, he will require increasingly more eye movements to see the entire object. This is the kinesthetic mode. The distant image—that apprehended in the visual mode of seeing—is a "pure surface" image, while the kinesthetic mode results in "abstracted visual ideas of form."[55] For Hildebrand the constant exchange between these two modes of seeing produces a total idea of form.

This is so not only for the viewer, but also for the artist. Hildebrand describes the process of the sculptor, who must work kinesthetically from an imagined form (again, a combination of visual and kinesthetic impressions), stepping back periodically to view his work from a distance. "This is the sculptor's three-dimensional problem," writes Hildebrand.[56] He seeks a solution in clarifying form.

This may be achieved in part by working from a clear idea of "inherent form." Inherent form, according to Hildebrand, is that which can be abstracted from objects, that is unchanging and present always, despite changes in the object's lighting, surroundings, or the vantage point of the viewer. The effects of these variables on the object

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*The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, trans. Max Meyer and Robert Morris Ogden (New York: G.E. Stechert, 1945), as well as the original German text, Adolf Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form in der Bildenden Kunst* (Strassburg: Heitz and Mündel, 1893). All quotations are from the Mallgrave and Ikonomou translation.

[54] Hildebrand, "The Problem of Form," 228.

[55] Ibid., 229-230.

[56] Ibid., 231.

Hildebrand describes as "effective form."[57] However, since the object will always be subjected to environmental effects, the viewer only ever sees—and only ever imagines—effective form. Hildebrand seems to suggest that inherent form can be sensed or felt, but never totally apprehended. Presumably, though, a strong and stable inherent form would contribute positively to an object's effective form, thus creating a more ideal viewing experience.

Important also to Hildebrand's discussion of perception and art is his investigation of space. He suggests that nature is a "spatial continuum," by which he means "space as a three-dimensional extension and as a three-dimensional mobility or kinesthetic activity of our imagination. Its most essential attribute is continuity."[58] He suggests that the spatial continuum is like a body of water; when containers are submerged in it, individual volumes are created, but the overall sense of continuity in, among, and between containers is preserved.[59]

The significance of Hildebrand's conception of space is his stress upon the interconnectedness of objects and the surrounding space. Each has its own form, and the two activate each other. The object is both defined by and defines space. Further, he writes:

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[57] Ibid., 233.

[58] Ibid., 238.

[59] Linda D. Henderson has suggested that Hildebrand's ideas about space likely drew from the late-nineteenth-century theories of "ether," which Scottish physicist and mathematician James Clerk Maxwell described as "a material substance of a more subtle kind than visible bodies, supposed to exist in those parts of space which are apparently empty." His suggestion that "aethers were invented for the planets to swim in" suggests a fluid consistency. See James Clerk Maxwell, "Ether," *Encyclopædia Britannica Ninth Edition* 8 (1878): 568-572. For a discussion of the ether in early twentieth-century art, see Henderson, "Vibratory Modernism: Boccioni, Kupka, and the Ether of Space," in *From Energy to Information: Representation in Science and Technology, Art, and Literature*, ed. Bruce Clarke and Linda Dalrymple Henderson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002): 126-149. See also Bruce J. Hunt's essay "Lines of Force, Swirls of Ether," in the same volume.

> If we . . . set for ourselves the task of making visible the appearance of this natural space as a whole, then we first have to imagine it three-dimensionally as a void filled in part by the individual volumes of objects and in part by the air. The void exists not as something externally limited but rather as something internally animated.[60]

Thus he conceives of space as active and animate, defined (but not limited by) the various forms within it.

Hildebrand returns to perception and the imagination to explain how we apprehend space. He argues that our imagination advances into depth, proceeding from the front to the back of our visual field, sweeping over the various volumes within it that help define the space. After a discussion of the tools the artist might use to create depth, including foreshortening, superimposition, color, and light and shade, Hildebrand devotes an entire section of his treatise to "The Concept of Relief." It is here that he reveals *the* problem of form: "How far the artist is able to represent each individual value in relation to this universal value of depth conditions the harmony of the image. . . . The more clearly this can be felt, the more coherent and satisfactory is the impression. This unity is the central problem of form in art, and the value of a work of art is determined by the extent to which it attains this unity."[61] Relief is ideal in obtaining this unity because it allows for the visual mode of seeing without kinesthetic activity and it speaks to the relationship between surface movement (two dimensions) and movement into depth (three dimensions). Finally, it "places us as observers in a secure relationship with nature."[62] Architecture, too, benefits from this principle: "Notwithstanding all the

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[60] Hildebrand, "The Problem of Form," 239.
[61] Ibid., 252.
[62] Ibid., 252.

stylistic distinctions that architecture displays, its task remains to unify its forms as an effect of relief. Only in this way does a building achieve artistic unity."[63]

Hildebrand reserves the last section of his treatise for sculpture, which he feels is closely connected to drawing, relief, and architecture, arguing that relief results from giving depth to drawing, and sculpture results from rounding out relief. The bulk of the section is devoted to explaining his own sculptural process, recommendations for direct carving, and musings on the work of Michelangelo. Hildebrand describes drawing the image on the principle surface of the stone and working first as if creating a relief, slowly working the sculpture into the round. For Hildebrand the process of direct cutting into stone is ideal. Though he admits that modeling in clay is valuable when creating studies or sketches for an idea, and also in furthering knowledge of form in general, he argues that it "does not develop the artistic unity of the whole as an image." This is primarily because modeling in clay does not maintain the integrity of a spatial volume as direct cutting does, but rather aims to create a form without a clear conception of the spatial relations that would have been defined by the stone block. As Hildebrand explains, "We have seen that this method of direct cutting stone frees a figure from the block of stone in such a way that we still sense the block as a unity even though it has materially disappeared, for the high points combine in the exterior surfaces and still represent those surfaces."[64]

Hildebrand concludes *The Problem of Form* with a discussion of Michelangelo, whose work he views as the pinnacle of sculpture. The subtle and effective movement of Michelangelo's sculptures, he writes, was exploited by his successors and thus turned

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[63] Ibid., 260.
[64] Ibid., 276.

into "affected and exaggerated gestures."[65] This may well be a criticism of Rodin, who often expressed movement in his work through dramatic gesture and contortion. He goes on to argue that in Michelangelo's work imagination and representation are one in the same and that his work is characterized by "the greatest possible utilization of the block of stone, within the most self-contained general appearance." Finally, Hildebrand writes that Michelangelo's work is "directly related to a lasting simplification of the representational method and unification of space."[66] Thus, Michelangelo's work is ideal because he attains unity by effectively using the self-contained stone block and maintaining the exchange between artistic imagination and artistic process.

[65] Ibid., 278.
[66] Ibid., 277.

## *The Problem of Form* as a Source for Twentieth-Century Artists

After the publication of *The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts* in 1893, the book quickly gained popularity among practicing artists and theorists alike, and it subsequently went through several editions. Yet, despite the fame of his aesthetic theories in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Hildebrand today remains a relatively obscure figure in the history of modern art. During the late nineteenth century, however, he was well known in Germany for his sculpture, which included numerous commissions such as the Wittelsbach Fountain in Munich. Hildebrand had also exhibited in the 1873 Vienna World Exhibition (*Weltausstellung 1873 Wien*), and in 1878 at the Paris Salon. In 1884 Cornelius Gurlitt organized a solo exhibition of his works in Berlin.[67] However, it was the publication of *The Problem of Form* that catapulted Hildebrand into discussions of aesthetics.

The effect of the treatise on artistic circles was immense. According to Rudolf Wittkower, from the time of its publication to the First World War, *The Problem of Form* was the most widely read and influential book on art.[68] Further, he argued, the fate of sculpture at the close of the nineteenth century rested in the hands of two men: one "obvious"—Auguste Rodin—and the other, who "does not so easily come to mind," Adolf von Hildebrand.[69]

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[67] Erich G. Ranfft, "Adolf von Hildebrand's *Problem der Form* and his 'Front' Against Auguste Rodin" (M.A. Thesis, Queen's University, 1990), 10.

[68] Rudolf Wittkower, *Sculpture: Processes and Principles*, 233.

[69] Ruth Butler, ed., *Rodin in Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 21, and Rudolf Wittkower, *Sculpture: Processes and Principles* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 232. Hildebrand appears (typically as the antithesis of Rodin) in various other surveys on sculpture, including Albert E. Elsen, *Origins of Modern Sculpture: Pioneers and Premises* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1974), which aligns Elie Nadelman, Wilhelm Lindbick, Aristide Maillol, and Constantin Brancusi with Hildebrand; and Herbert Read, *A Concise History of Modern Sculpture* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), which views *The Problem of Form in Fine Arts* as having a negative effect on the development of modern sculpture.

Hildebrand's *The Problem of Form* encouraged early twentieth-century sculptors to look to the past for models of clear and stable form and contributed to attitudes toward material and process. Such concerns would have resonated with Meštrović, whose work demonstrates a keen sensitivity to materials. Maria Meštrović recalls her father's desire to touch the materials with which he worked in her discussion of his admiration of *The Slaves*, and she adds, "The need to feel all things beautiful, animate or inanimate, was part of his temperament. Many times I saw him caress the trunk of a tree just brought to his studio, or a sculpted marble block. . . . Touching was for him another way of looking."[70] She explains that Meštrović as a child had developed a relationship with Lujo Marun, a Franciscan friar and archaeologist who investigated the eighth-century ruins of churches and monasteries built by Croatian kings near Meštrović's hometown. This early encounter would influence his "peculiar" relationship with stone:

> He always felt that it possessed the indelible prints of a culture and the stamp of cultural language. He held that stone was as noble as wood, and possessed a vigorous power that wood could not produce. Shapes, lines, and volumes of a magnitude that made the sculptor's hands look small, might be elicited from the stone and to which the sculptor transferred essential human experiences.[71]

Like Meštrović, an increasing number of early twentieth-century sculptors preferred to work in stone instead of modeling clay for bronze casting. Though the kneaded surfaces of Rodin's sculptures clearly captured the touch of the artist's hand, the properties of a finished sculpture cast in bronze have little in common with the soft and malleable consistency of clay. As Rather argues, in their view the bronze cast of an original clay model was "a false index of the artist's original."[72] Indeed, the degree of separation between artist and work was even greater in the case of Rodin, whose work in stone was

[70] Meštrović, *Ivan Meštrović*, 48.
[71] Ibid., 18.
[72] Rather, *Archaism*, 62.

cut by assistants, or *praticiens*, who used pointing machines to transfer the image of a clay model to marble.[73]

In a quest for a more authentic, direct interaction between artist and material, sculptors looked to the practice of direct carving. Rather argues, for instance, that the roughness of Constantin Brancusi's early direct carvings shows his struggle to work with the material, "making emphatic his own labor" to "visually reject the idea of the smoothly functioning academic studio, which separated sculptor from finished work by a complicated intermediary process."[74] Meštrović's boyhood work *Bosnian on a Horse* (1898) demonstrates his own early exploration of direct carving in stone, a process at which he would quickly become adept (fig. 2).

Meštrović gained fame early on in Bilinić's workshop for his ability to carve stone directly, without the use of models or measuring tools; he "worked the stone and wood with an innate sense of sizes and proportions, without drawings or clay forms, because he was ignorant of those methods."[75] For Meštrović, direct carving created continuity between his earliest artistic investigations in Croatia and the work he produced after moving to Vienna, where Hildebrand's ideas about direct carving were advocated by Meštrović's mentors. As Rather explains in a discussion of Austrian-sculptor Karl Bitter's stylistic sources:

> His concern for the relationship between technique and material may have been stimulated not only by his study of Greek sculpture and of Hildebrand but also by ideas of his former teacher Edmund Hellmer, whose *Lehrjahre in der Plastik*

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[73] Matthew Gale, "Brancusi: An equal among rocks, trees, people, beasts and plants," 24 and Alexandra Parigoris, "The road to Damascus," 51 in *Constantin Brancusi: The essence of things*, eds. Carmen Giménez and Matthew Gale (London: Tate Publishing, 2004); see also Rather, *Archaism*, 63.
[74] Rather, *Archaism*, 72-73.
[75] Meštrović, *Ivan Meštrović*, 18.

> (1900) is a work much indebted to Hildebrand in its stress on the importance of working directly in any medium.[76]

Hellmer, who had supported Mestrovic's admittance to the Academy of Fine Arts, likely informed Meštrović's thinking. Meštrović studied with Hellmer from 1901-02, just after the publication of *Lehrjahre in der Plastik* and the institution of Hellmer's academic reforms, which required students to learn direct carving in addition to clay modeling.[77]

Croatian art historian Duško Kečkemet claims that Hildebrand's *The Problem of Form* caused Meštrović's disenchantment with Rodin, yet he does not discuss Meštrović's work as it relates to Hildebrand's theories.[78] Currently it is impossible to determine conclusively that Meštrović read Hildebrand's *The Problem of Form*, as there appear to exist no writings that directly illuminate their relationship. However, given the prevalence of Hildebrand's ideas, including their importance for Hellmer, Meštrović at the very least would have been aware of them. This investigation of Meštrović's architectural sculpture will reveal significant parallels between the ideas of Meštrović and Hildebrand beyond the importance of direct carving.

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[76] Susan Rather, "Toward a New Language of Form: Karl Bitter and the Beginnings of Archaism in American Sculpture," *Winterthur Portfolio* 25, No. 1 (Spring 1990): 17.
[77] Kraševac, "Ivan Meštrović–rano razdoblje," 183.
[78] Kečkemet, *Ivan Meštrović,* n.p.

## Meštrović's Architectural Sculpture

### MEŠTROVIĆ AND THE RELATIONSHIP OF SCULPTURE TO ARCHITECTURE: THE *KOSOVO TEMPLE*

In 1911, both Meštrović and Hildebrand exhibited at the International Exhibition of Art in Rome. Hildebrand exhibited three portraits in the German pavilion, where one small room was dedicated to sculpture.[79] Meanwhile, in the Serbian pavilion, Meštrović exhibited over seventy sculptures, including several of the "Kosovo Fragments," the constituent parts of his *Kosovo Temple*, for which he won first prize for sculpture.[80]

The *Kosovo Temple*, a monumental, sculptural-architectural complex designed to promote South Slav unification after Austro-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia in 1908-09, sparked Meštrović's critical acclaim. Meštrović, along with several other Croatian artists, had refused the invitation to display their work in the Austrian and Hungarian pavilion, and chose instead to exhibit in the Serbian pavilion. His "Kosovo Fragments," as the consituent parts of the *Kosovo Temple* came to be known, dominated the space.

Meštrović had conceived of the *Kosovo Temple* in 1906 and began to produce its constituent parts the following year, just after he had relocated to Paris. For several years, Meštrović devoted himself entirely to this project, which, due to lack of funding, was never fully realized. The individual sculptures illustrated Serbian epic poems lamenting the Turkish triumph at Kosovo Polje in 1389, while the *Kosovo Temple* as a whole was to serve as a monument to South Slavic suffering and oppression. He completed the popular equestrian statue of *Kraljević Marko* by at least 1910, when it

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[79] See the ground plan of the German Pavilion in Rome (City), *Germany*, Berlin: F. Bruckmann, 1911. The catalogue of exhibited works includes Hildebrand's *Bust of the Prince Otto von Bismark*, in bronze, *Eleonora Duse*, also in bronze, and a terra-cotta relief of *Eleonora Duse*.
[80] Rather, *Archaism*, 28.

served as the centerpiece of an exibition of Croatian art in Zagreb. Female figures symbolizing the widows of warriors at Kosovo and rows of caryatids accompanied *Kraljević Marko* at the 1911 exhibition in Rome (fig. 14).

To design the caryatids, Meštrović looked to archaic Greek art—possibly using the Louvre's archaic *kore* from the Cheramyes group (560-570 B.C.) as a model (fig. 15).[81] This statue is one of the oldest known examples of a sculptural type representing robed young women, known collectively as *korai*.[82] Rather than extending one leg forward like many of the male *koroi* figures, this figure is cylindrical in form, her feet positioned side by side beneath her columnar robe. Subtle, parallel incisions run the length of her chiton (a long, pleated tunic), while curvilinear lines define the himation worn over her shoulders.[83] One of her arms hangs at her side, while the other, now lost, rested on her chest. Meštrović's caryatids assume the same posture. Most stand with their feet together, and their robes, which, like that the Louvre's *kore* display a pattern of parallel lines, fan out over their toes. In a gesture similar to that of the *kore*, they position one arm across their waists.

For his caryatids, Meštrović chose certain archaic elements and adapted them. While under the *kore*'s rigid garments there is just a faint suggestion of the body beneath, Meštrović has used the linear patterns of his caryatid's robes to emphasize the curves they cover. And, while *korai* typically hold their heads high and gaze forward, displaying the

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[81] For more information about the Louvre *kore*, see Marie-Bénédicte Astier, "Kore from the Cheramyes Group," Musée du Louvre online collection. Accessed August 3, 2011.
[82] Susan Woodford, *An Introduction to Greek Art* (London: Duckworth, 1986), 50-56.
[83] For a discussion of the rendering of the chiton and himation in archaic Greek sculpture, see Sheila Adam, *The Technique of Greek Sculpture in the Archaic and Classical Periods* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966), 52-53.

characteristic archaic smile, Meštrović's caryatids solemnly gaze downward, into the space where visitors to the *Kosovo Temple* would have walked.

A wooden model of the *Kosovo Temple* accompanied the fragments to provide a sense of their intended positioning within the temple (fig. 16). Meštrović arranged a trio of domed halls at the end of a long corridor to create the shape of a Latin cross. Caryatids lined the corridor, and behind these, reliefs illustrated the epic of Kosovo. The largest octagonal hall stood at the end of the corridor and was to house the sculptures of heroes and widows. Below the largest dome runs a frieze, consisting of square metopes featuring equestrian scenes. Each square relief illustrates one horse and rider, suggesting the battle of Kosovo Polje.

Around this central hall, Meštrović postioned the three smaller domed chambers. A pair of sculptures guards the entrance to each. These are perhaps winged sphinxes or Assyrian winged human-headed bulls, called *shedu* or *lamassu*, which guarded the entrances of cities and palaces.[84] Meštrović could also have seen similar guardian figures at the Louvre, where two *shedu* stand at the entrance of the Assyrian gallery (fig. 17).[85] Finally, above the atrium leading into the central hall was to be a tower, its five levels decorated with winged figures that, like the caryatids, are rigid and columnar.[86]

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[84] *Lamassu* (or *lama*) refers to the female deity, while *shedu* (or *alad*) refers to the corresponding male deity. Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 115.

[85] E. Pottier, *Catalogue des Antiquités Assyriennes* (Paris: Musées Nationaux, Palais du Louvre, 1924). The photograph of the Assyrian gallery is from 1924, but an engraving titled *La grande salle assyrienne* from 1863 by Charles Maurand shows the *shedu* and the reliefs along the walls in the same position as in the photograph, confirming that they would have been on view in the same configuration during Meštrović's first visit to Paris. For additional information on the *shedu* at the Louvre, see Marie-José Castor, "Winged human-headed bull," Musée du Louvre online collection. Accessed August 3, 2011.

[86] Norman L. Rice, ed. *The Sculpture of Ivan Meštrović* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1948), 15, and Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, and Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 204-205.

Though the consituent sculptures of the *Kosovo Temple* were met with almost unanimous praise, the architectural complex itself garnered criticism, with scholars and critics focusing on its successes and failures. In 1915, Charles Aitken wrote for *The Burlington Magazine*:

> As far as one can judge from this model, Meštrović is not an architect. He has little feeling for composition of masses. His domes are poor in form, and do not group happily with each other or compose with the original and striking campanile. The portal, the long colonnade with the caryatids and the tower alike show impressive originality in the use of animal and human forms as bases and supports, but one feels that he should work with someone who has a knowledge of architecture and real feeling for composition and masses.[87]

Of course, Meštrović did have a knowledge of architecture, having worked with both Wagner and Ohmann, but the *Kosovo Temple* was clearly a fantastic project driven by Meštrović's imaginative pairing of various stylistic sources. The architecture of the temple demonstrates his interest in the architecture of Croatia as well as the projects of Ohmann. The campanile of the *Kosovo Temple* resembles the multi-tiered Romanesque belfry of the Cathedral of St. Duje in Split, adjacent to Diocletian's Palace, while its domes bear a striking resemblence to that of Ohmann's Kurhaus in Merano (fig. 18). The Kurhaus, originally designed in 1874 by Josef Czerny, had become a popular health resort among the Hapsburg Empire's elite. Ohmann carried out a project to redesign the building in 1911. In addition to updating the Kurhaus with a rotunda, Ohmann also added a rotunda surmounted by a polygonal ribbed dome of a type found on many of his designs from 1910-11.[88]

The *Kosovo Temple* also resembles the Serbian pavilion itself (fig. 19). Designed by Serbian architect Petar Bajalović, whom Mestrović and Toma Rosandić assisted, the

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[87] Aitken, "Notes—Ivan Meštrović," 259.
[88] "The Meran Kurhaus," *Friedrich Ohmann: an Architect between the Disciplines*, accessed July 6, 2011, http://www.ohmann.cc/index1.php?lang=en&menueID=2&contentID=12.

Serbian pavilion features heavy pediments similar to those found on Greek temples and ribbed domes that evoke the architecture of Serbia's Orthodox churches. The pavilion, which certainly sought to inspire its viewers, is unsettling and clumsy in its juxtaposition of stylistic elements.

Duško Kečkemet's criticisms of the *Kosovo Temple* that echo those of Aitken:

> At that time, and to a lesser extent even later, Meštrović conceived architecture as a monumental collection of sculptures the whole given unity by serving a single idea. . . . He made the fatal and basic mistake in that . . . he was not conscious of the architectural structure as such. He conceived of architectural forms primarily as in sculpture, as a matter of volume, not space.[89]

Both Aitken and Kečkemet doubted Meštrović's strength as an architect because of his inability to effectively arrange the architectural elements of the temple, and both comment on Meštrović's conception of volumetric forms in architecture. Aitken asserts that he has "little feeling for composition of masses," while Kečkemet suggests that he does indeed possess feeling for mass, but this is sculptural and not architectural. What both of these authors touch on, but do not give sufficient significance to, is Meštrović's exploration of the relationship between sculpture and architecture—a relationship Hildebrand mentions several times in *The Problem of Form*.

Hildebrand understands sculpture and architecture as inherently connected, describing the development of sculpture as rooted in the "freeing" of sculptural forms such as columns (and caryatids) from architecture:

> Architecture creates simple geometric solids as building members, and these then spring to life as sculptures. . . . This type of sculpture is important not only as a component of the architecture but also from a purely sculptural viewpoint. The plastic representation has remained bound to a simple, understandable spatial

[89] Kečkemet, *Ivan Meštrović*, n.p.

> unity, thus assuring a visual unity and repose. Architecture therefore has had a very healthy influence on the sculptural imagination.[90]

In the case of the caryatid, which stands in place of a column, offering both architectural support and sculptural ornamentation, the "simple geometric solids" are columns that "spring to life" in their transformation into sculptural representations of female figures. The contained and columnar stance of the caryatid maintains the form of the original geometric solid, and, reciprocally, the geometric solid (as well as the space around it) gives clarity of form to the caryatid.

According to Hildebrand, architecture positively influences sculpture, requiring of such sculpture geometric, clear, and stable form; likewise, sculptural "building members" such as caryatids and columns positively influence architecture. Hildebrand also suggests that architecture's task is to "unify its forms as an effect of relief."[91] By this he means that architecture should create a sense of depth, or of passage into space, as relief does through its three-dimensional arrangement of two-dimensional planes. He uses the Greek temple, with its exterior arrangement of columns, as an example of how to accomplish this:

> The Greek temple . . . offers a closed spatial mass: the columns are placed so close to each other that they function as a perforated, frontal layer of space. What we perceive is not a spatial body fronted by columns: the columns form part of the spatial body and our ideal movement into depth passes between them.[92]

Crucial to Hildebrand's argument was his understanding of space. At the end of the nineteenth-century, concerns with space were relatively new to discussions of artistic production: as Adrian Forty explains, "space" belongs to a specifically modern discourse, along with "form" and "design." Had discussions of space occurred before 1890, he

[90] Hildebrand, "The Problem of Form," 271-272.
[91] Ibid., 260.
[92] Ibid., 259.

writes, they "would have been entirely meaningless outside a small circle of German aesthetic philosophers: as a term, 'space' simply did not exist in the architectural vocabulary until the 1890s."[93] It was not until German architect Gottfried Semper's theory of architecture that space became more than a loose synonym for "volume" or "void," conveying something more substantial, active, and alive.

Semper suggests in *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts* (1860-62) that material forms the "spatial idea," and thus architecture is primarily concerned with enclosing space.[94] Hildebrand was among the subsequent theorists to expand upon Semper's ideas, contributing his own interpretation of space as expansive and essentially continuous. Space as described by Hildebrand is not demarcated and contained within smaller spaces, such as buildings, but flows within, outside, and around, as illustrated by his analogy of space to water surrounding and filling submerged volumes. These volumes, rather than constricting space, give form to it. So, the volume itself, whether a sculpture or building or other object, communicates its own form as well as that of the space (or air) surrounding it.[95] Further, Hildebrand suggests that our relationship to space is directly expressed in architecture, since it supplies "a definite spatial feeling instead of the mere idea of the possibility of movement in space. . . . Space itself, in the sense of inherent form, becomes effective form for the eye."[96]

The columns of the Greek temple, then, are part of the spatial body created by the total work of architecture. The space between columns allows for a feeling of procession

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[93] Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 259.
[94] Gottfried Semper, *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Michael Robinson (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2004), 753.
[95] Hildebrand, "The Problem of Form," 238-239.
[96] Ibid., 269.

into depth, while at the same time, the columns give form to the space around them. Space between columns, for example, possesses its own inherent form, but this form changes, becoming effective form, as the viewer moves toward and through the columns.

One of the defining characteristics of the *Kosovo Temple* is Meštrović's generous use of columns and caryatids. The model shows columns lining the exterior of the main corridor and defining the exterior plane of the polygonal rotunda beneath the largest dome. Caryatids were to line the interior of the corridor, creating a total spatial body punctuated by volumes (sculptures) that draw the viewer into depth. The visitor to the *Kosovo Temple* could move into depth through the space between two columns in a row, or she could move into depth by walking down the main corridor between rows of caryatids. The campanile also makes use of such an arrangement. Each cubic tier is defined by an exterior arrangement of angels so rigid and cylindrical that they appear at first glance to be columns rather than caryatids. The arrangement mimics the effect of the Romanesque campanile in Split, where arched "perforations" between columns and piers lend a conception of space to its cubic tiers.[97]

Despite Meštrović's enthusiastic exploration of space and sculpture as they relate to architecture and his inspired pairing of various architectural sources, the model of the temple does not achieve a sense of unity and balance. As Aitken noted, the domes do not pair well with the campanile. Instead, they seem to overpower it. The sheer mass and complexity of the model are impressive, but the temple would perhaps have benefited

[97] Hildebrand mentions the Romanesque as the other style of architecture that successfully unifies its forms in the effect of relief: "Every opening is conceived as a perforation of a succession of spatial layers placed one behind another—a conception graphically demonstrated in the clearly contoured openings." See Ibid., 259-260.

from a simplification of constituent parts to make a more cohesive whole and a reworking of the relationship between sculpture and architecture.

Meštrović investigated sculpture's relationship to architecture in several subsequent projects. The *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier* (1933-1938), for instance, is a simpler work of architecture that also incorporates sculpture (fig. 20).[98] King Aleksander of Yugoslavia had commissioned the massive granite monument, located outside of Belgrade atop Mount Avala, after peasants erected crosses where they had found the skeleton of a nameless World War I soldier wearing Serbian boots. Aleksander found the makeshift monument unsuitable, particularly as the site grew more popular with foreigners, and he enlisted Meštrović to construct monument for the fallen soldiers of World War I and the First Balkan War for the site.[99]

The monument assumes the form of a rectangular temple or shrine perched atop a multi-level base. On either side, a staircase provides access to the tomb, guarded by caryatids wearing folk costumes from eight regions of Yugoslavia. The monument plays with the relationship between sculpture and architecture as well as with its setting; the solid and heavy tomb sitting on its heavy base mimics the monument itself, resting on top of Mount Avala in the spot where a medieval fortress once stood. Due to the unifying dark color of the massive granite blocks, Meštrović's monument appears to have initially been a solid stone block from which the interior space for the tomb was carved out, along with the caryatids and their niches, carrying the theme of direct carving into the interior

[98] The tomb is also known as the *Monument to the Unknown Hero*.
[99] Ivan Meštrović, *Uspomene na Političke Ljude I Dogadjaje* (Buenos Aires: Knjižnica Hrvatske Revije, 1961), 244.

space of the monument.[100] Seen in this light, Kečkemet's observation rings true: Meštrović did conceive of this architectural form as sculpture.[101] But the relationship of the two at Mount Avala is more complex. In *The Problem of Form*, Hildebrand writes:

> The relationship between architecture and sculpture can only be of an architectural nature; that is, either sculpture takes over the role of filling or crowning an architectural whole and itself becomes part of the architecture, or the architecture becomes the servant of sculpture and acts as a mere plinth or pedestal.[102]

At *The Tomb of the Unknown* Soldier, Meštrović's caryatids emerge from the granite structure, their feminine curves contrasting with the angular monument. They appear to be non-functional in terms of providing support, yet they are an integral part of the architecture. The idea of architecture serving sculpture here is a bit more difficult to locate, as the immediately identifiable sculptures—the caryatids—seem to submit to rather than dominate the massive structure surrounding them. But, the monument itself takes on the appearance of sculpture—the temple sheltering the tomb functions as a sculpture carved from a solid block, resting on the multi-level base as if it were "a mere plinth or pedestal." Perhaps Meštrović did conceive of architecture as sculpture, but he did so consciously, aware of the tension he was creating between the two.

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[100] Susan Rather identifies a similar interpretation of Hildebrand in Karl Bitter's 1915 Lowry Monument: "In a radical departure from his previous approach to relief sculpture, however, Bitter cut completely though the 2-foot-thick granite wall of the exedra so that the figures remain attached only at the point of their heads, hands, and lower bodies (seated on the ground). The figures occupy a position contained within the block, a creative interpretation of Hildebrand's prescription for unified works of sculpture." See Rather, "Toward a New Language of Form," 17.

[101] See quotation by Kečkemet on page 32.

[102] Hildebrand, "The Problem of Form," 266.

## MEŠTROVIĆ AND THE ISSUE OF RELIEF SCULPTURE: THE KAŠTELET

In *The Problem of Form* Hildebrand had suggested that if this dominance of one over the other is to be resolved, sculpture and architecture must each play equal parts in the object of representation—and this can only happen sculpturally through relief.[103] The key point here is the concept of relief as a form of representation that, in its very function, joins architecture and sculpture: the relief resides in architecture, but the image of the relief is created through sculpture. Beyond this key role as an intermediary between architecture and artistic representation, Hildebrand also promotes relief as the ideal method of representation for its inherent ability to promote seeing at a distance. Further, the central problem of unity and form as they relate to depth is best demonstrated through relief, which, again by default (as relief is essentially a succession of planes) draws the imagination back into unified fields of space. Finally, Hildebrand sees relief as not only related to architecture, but also to other modes of artistic representation through process.

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[103] This passage proves problematic. The two English translations I worked with each conveyed a slightly different idea. In German, the passage reads, "Architektur und Plastik können sich aber nicht gegenüberstehen als Bestandteile einer Handlung, eines Vorganges. Alsdann kann nur die Gesamtvorstellung, also der einheitliche Raum, von dem Architektur und Plastik je einen Teil ausmachen, der Gegenstand der Darstellung sein, d. h. eine vollständige Bildvorstellung, die plastisch nur als Relief zu geben ist" (Adolf von Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form in der Bildenden Kunst*, 97). Mallgrave's translation reads, "Only an overall conception, that is, a coherent space in which architecture and sculpture each play their respective parts, can be the subject of the artistic imagination—an integral ideal image that can be presented sculpturally only as relief" (Hildebrand, "The Problem of Form," 266). In the third edition, translated by Max Meyer and Robert Morris Odgen, the same passage reads, "Architecture and sculpture can never be opposed as factors of equal value in an act or process. If it is desired to oppose them in one representation, then the object of this representation can only be the unitary space which contains them both. Sculpturally this can be represented only in a relief" (Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture,* 115). Though I generally prefer the Mallgrave translation, I believe here the Meyer and Odgen translation is more appropriate and conveys more closely that the power struggle, so to speak, between sculpture and architecture is best resolved in the unifying space of relief.

He argues that sculpture "arose from drawing, for giving depth to drawing leads to the idea of relief."[104]

Hildebrand's emphasis on relief as a solution to various aesthetic concerns, such as creating successful architecture as well as promoting a unifying balance between two and three dimensions, prompted many artists to experiment with relief as a way to reclaim stability and control in their art.[105] French sculptor Aristide Maillol, for instance, explored the compositional effects of working within the square format of Greek metopes. In *Desire* (1906-08), two figures crouch in such a way that they begin to conform to the surrounding framework (fig. 21). Antoine Bourdelle, also a French sculptor, similarly investigated the compositional possibilities of relief, as in *The Dance* (1912), in which two figures conform more clearly to the rectangular frame. The arms of the man on the left press against the upper border of the relief, while the woman on the right leans her head unnaturally backward along the right edge of the relief (fig. 22). *The Dance* is one of several reliefs Bourdelle designed for the façade of the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. Michel Dufet describes the challenge Bourdelle faced in achieving harmony among the façade reliefs, as three were situated at the top of the building, and five smaller reliefs were located just above the doors. It was this "architectural necessity," argues Dufet, that guided the compositional success of the reliefs. Bourdelle had to increase the dimensions of the figures in the smaller reliefs to avoid a discrepancy

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[104] Hildebrand, "The Problem of Form," 271. Archaic sculptors actually directly carved into stone using sketched outlines on all four faces of the stone block rather than rounding out a drawing on one face of the block. See Woodford, *Greek Art*, 38-39 and Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway, *The Severe Style in Greek Sculpture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 19.

[105] For a discussion of modern interests in relief, particularly on the part of Antoine Bourdelle, Aristide Maillol, Bitter, and Manship, see the chapter "Archaism as Modernism: Content and Technique" in Rather, *Archaism, Modernism, and the Art of Paul Manship*, 51-75; see also the chapter titled "The Revolution in Relief Sculpture" in Elsen, *Origins of Modern Sculpture*, 130-142.

with those of the larger reliefs and maintain clarity so the reliefs could be understood from below.[106]

Though he assisted Rodin for several years, Bourdelle was not afraid to criticize Rodin's *Gates of Hell*, accusing it of being "too full of holes" on account of its dramatic combination of low and high relief.[107] By contrast, *The Dance* maintains planarity. Meštrović's *Girl Dancer* (1912) similarly bends her head forward to conform to the framework of the relief (fig. 23). Strong contours and polished surfaces give a clear sense of her solid form, and like Bourdelle, Meštrović maintains a sense of planar movement and control over depth rather than creating undulating movement by alternating high and low relief.[108]

Meštrović experimented with relief sculpture in both stone and in wood, creating many reliefs over the course of his lifetime. Twenty-eight of Meštrović's wood reliefs can be found today at the Kaštelet ("little castle"), a chapel and adjoining courtyard near the Meštrović Gallery in Split, Croatia, where they were installed in 1954. He began working on the reliefs in 1917 and continued to work on them throughout his life, completing the last reliefs between 1948 and 1950.

Perched at the top of a cliff overlooking the Adriatic Sea, the Kaštelet had originally been built as a summerhouse for the Caprogrosso family in the sixteenth century. It then served as a shelter from Turkish attacks, a tannery, a cloth-dyers

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[106] Ionel Jianou and Michel Dufet, *Bourdelle* (Paris: Arted, Editions d'Art, 1965), 46-49. For studies of the reliefs, see Denise Basdevant, *Bourdelle et la Théâtre des Champs-Elysées* (Paris: Chêne/Hachette, 1982).
[107] Quoted in Albert Elsen, *Pioneers of Modern Sculpture*, 84, in a discussion of how Hildebrand's approach to relief differed from Rodin's.
[108] Interestingly, the discussions of Bourdelle's background echo those of Meštrović's. Ionel Jianou writes, for instance, "Bourdelle frequently evoked his peasant origin. . . . These childhood memories left their mark on his thinking. His ability to listen to the voice of rock and the language of stone . . . derived from his first contact with life. Bourdelle was the first to love the beauty of stone weathered by wind and rain, the penetration of water and the erosion of time." See Jianou and Dufet, *Bourdelle*,10.

workshop, and a lazaretto for plague victims before falling into disrepair. Meštrović bought the property in 1939 with the intention of converting the architectural remains into an exhibition space for his reliefs.[109]

The remains of the original courtyard of the Kaštelet featured twenty-four Doric columns on three sides. Meštrović enclosed the courtyard, adding a loggia with four Doric-style columns to make a total of twenty-eight columns. He also added the Church of the Holy Cross, built to house the twenty-eight wooden reliefs and a wooden crucifix from 1916. First shown in London, the crucifix had eventually traveled to Zagreb where, from 1937, it hung in St. Mark's Church. The gaunt and stylized Christ so upset its viewers that it was then taken down and transferred to the apse of the Church of the Holy Crucifix.[110]

The twenty-eight wooden reliefs line the walls of the church (fig. 24). The reliefs are set into a single wooden frame so that they hang on the wall not as separate and individual works of art, but as one wooden panel that encircles the interior space of the church at eye level.[111] The installation creates the effect of a continuous frieze. The arrangement is reminiscent of the relief sculpture display in the Assyrian Gallery at the Louvre. There, large Assyrian reliefs line the walls to give a sense of how they would

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[109] For general information on the Kaštelet, see "Crikvine—Kaštelet, Split: The History of the Complex," Ivan Meštrović Museums, accessed July 14, 2011, http://www.mdc.hr/mestrovic/kastelet/povijest-en.htm, Duško Kečkemet, *Ivan Meštrović: Kaštelet* (Split: Galerija Meštrović, 1969), and the pamphlet by Guido Quien, *Ivan Meštrović: Kaštelet* (Split: The Ivan Meštrović Foundation, 1998).

[110] In a conversation between the author and Ivan Meštrović's son, Dr. Mate Meštrović, Dr. Meštrović explained that this crucified Christ was for his father not intended to be a realistic representation, but symbolic of the pain and suffering of World War I.

[111] For a virtual tour of the interior of the church, see http://www.mdc.hr/mestrovic/kastelet/qt-sadrzaj/qt-crkva-01-en.htm.

have been displayed in Assyrian palaces, where they completely filled interior walls (fig. 17).[112]

The creation of the Kaštelet reliefs, which chronicle the life of Christ, beginning with the *Annunciation* and concluding with the *Ascension*, also spans much of Meštrović's adult life. He carved four reliefs in 1917, two in 1927, 10 between 1940 and 1943, and twelve reliefs between 1948 and 1950.[113] The events begin with the *Annunciation* at the north end of the church, near the west entrance. They proceed in chronological order (apart from *The Kiss of Judas*, which precedes *The Last Supper*) along the walls of the church, ending with *Noli mi tangere* on the other side of the entrance. On either side of the crucifix hang the *Transfiguration* and the *Ascension*.

Interestingly, Meštrović did not carve the reliefs in the order they appear in the Church of the Holy Crucifix. For example, he carved the *Annunciation*, the first relief of the cycle, in 1927. The following scene, the *Nativity*, was carved between 1948 and 1950. *Madonna and the Angels*, the third relief, was one of the first Meštrović carved in 1917. The four reliefs from 1917 and the two reliefs from 1927 all demonstrate a preoccupation with line and a Hildebrandian concern for creating well-defined figures and a clear visual impression.

In *Christ Driving the Money Changers From the Temple* (1917-18), Christ stands at the left of the composition, brandishing a multi-tailed whip (fig. 25). The lines of the tails appear again in Christ's hair, and again in the repeating outlines of the backs of the money changers. This repetition can be found in several Assyrian reliefs as means of communicating the idea of depth across a flat surface. For example, in a depiction of a

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[112] Paul Collins, *Assyrian Palace Sculptures* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 25-26.
[113] For the purpose of this thesis, I will focus on the reliefs created before World War II.

servant leading chariot horses, the full body of just one horse can be seen—the other three horses are indicated by successive outlines that repeat the face of the first (fig. 26).

The rendering of Christ's clenched hand evokes Secessionist expression, for instance the elongated fingers and pronounced knuckles found in numerous sketches by Egon Schiele (fig. 27).[114] Elongated hands feature prominently in *Deposition*, another relief from 1917 (fig. 28). The figures of this relief settle into the lower right corner, where an emaciated Christ sits on the lap of Mary. Another female figure, likely Mary Magdalene, sits next to the pair, completing the circular arrangement of figures. The figures' fingers are extraordinarily long, and their hands curve like hooks or talons. The long and prominent tool marks creating background space around the figures recall the shape of their fingers. This relief is unique in that Meštrović did not completely carve out the background, but left the surface of the upper fourth of the panel intact, perhaps to show more explicitly the evolution of the relief from wood panel to sculpted image.

The faces of Mary Magdalene and Christ are presented in profile. Christ's exhibits a strong and clearly defined nose that extends directly from his forehead and creates a sharp, almost ninety-degree angle above the deeply incised space between his parted lips. This strong profile is found in all three of the 1917 reliefs depicting Christ. In the *Temptation of Christ*, he assumes the same wide-legged stance found in *Christ Driving the Money Changers From the Temple*, and he again stands on the left side of the

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[114] Meštrović and Schiele were acquaintances in Vienna. In a 1910 letter to Arthur Roessler proposing an exhibition, Schiele mentioned Meštrović among other artists he admired: "Why can't there be a large international exhibition in the Kunstlerhaus. I've said this to Klimt. For example, each artist has a room to himself—Rodin, Van Gogh, Minne . . . Klimt, Toorop, Stuck, Liebermann, Slevogt, Corinth, Meštrović, etc. Only painting and sculpture. What a sensation for Vienna!" Christian von Nebehay, *Egon Schiele: 1890-1918 Leben, Briefe, Gedichte*, "Documents und Korrespondenz 1910," no. 144 (Salzburg and Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 1979), 139. English translation after Dean A. Porter, "Ivan Meštrović: The Current State of Criticism," *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier* 19, No. 2 (Fall 1984): 19.

panel, throwing his arms up in a gesture of defense or refusal (fig. 29). Though the figure on the right must be Satan, he displays no demonic characteristics, but holds a rounded object in his hand, perhaps the stone he challenges Christ to turn into bread in Matthew 4:3. Meštrović again has shown the faces of both figures in profile, yet the body of Satan is shown almost frontally. Similarly, the body of Christ is turned to show his backside. This representational device, termed fractional representation, combines the most recognizable aspects of a figure.[115] Commonly found in Egyptian art, the pairing of heads in profile with bodies shown frontally is also typical of Assyrian relief sculpture.[116] Christ and Satan stand upon rocks at the bottom of the panel, and prominent tool marks fill the space around them.

*Madonna and the Angels* is unique among the four reliefs from 1917 in that only two small areas function as background: one at the bottom of the composition, where the Virgin sits, and the other alongside the left edge of the panel (fig. 30). Again, Meštrović has defined these areas with parallel tool marks. The relief is very low, lessening the distinction between chiseled background and surface figures. Meštrović has instead focused on utilizing the entire surface of the wooden panel, almost all of which is devoted to the congregating angels. The angels in the first row kneel around the Virgin and Child. The other angels gather around the central pair, each row appearing to hover above the next, rather than receding back into space. All of the figures, their eyes closed, hold their open palms upward in prayer. The angels are almost identical, but some tilt their heads to the right, and others to the left. The overall effect activates the surface of the relief, creating a subtle sense of vertical and horizontal movement. Only two of the figures,

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[115] Alan Pipes, *Foundations of Art and Design* (London: Laurence King Publishing, Ltd., 2003), 102.
[116] Collins, *Assyrian Palace Sculptures*, 25.

found kneeling on either side of the Virgin and Child, are shown in profile. The others exhibit simple and stylized features created with a restrained use of line: noses are two perpendicular lines forming a ninety-degree angle, and mouths and eyes are singular, shallow incisions. Emphasis again is on the sweeping curves of elongated fingers and hands, which repeat the shape of the wings tucked behind the angels' heads.

The two reliefs from 1927 are compositionally much simpler than the 1917 panels. In the *Annunciation* the angel Gabriel stands on the left side of the composition, as tall as the panel is high (fig. 31). In his left hand, he holds a stylized lily symbolic of Mary's purity. Mary kneels below Gabriel at the lower left of the composition, raising her hands in a gesture of humility. Diagonal lines extend from Gabriel to Mary, indicating the light of heaven and leading the eye from one figure to the other. This relief is slightly higher: the figures of Gabriel and Mary create the first layer, corresponding to the surface of the panel. Any details, such as lines in fabric, eyelids, and fingers, are shallowly incised into the surface. The light of heaven creates the next layer, appearing behind the figures rather than directly between them. The additional depth between the surface and the background emphasizes the well-defined outlines of the figures.

The same is true of the figures in *Christ and the Woman of Samaria*, a relief that exhibits a skillful pairing of clearly defined form and strong line with supple curves and delicate detail (fig. 32). Christ sits, again on the left side of the panel, at the edge of a cubic well. The woman of Samaria turns toward him, holding a water jug between them. Mestrovic's rendering of the figures has changed significantly. Whereas Christ in the reliefs from 1917 stands rigidly in an archaic, fractionalized pose, Christ here sits naturally on the rim of the well, his robes draping gently over his legs. Likewise, the

woman's contrapposto stance emphasizes the strong outline of her hip and thigh, creating a sense of natural movement, and her garment drapes similarly over her body, revealing the curves of her buttocks and calves. The faces of the figures have also changed, displaying more delicate, idealized features. Their hair, rather than being suggested by stylized, parallel lines, is more naturalistic and features braided sections. Finally, the background is significantly smoother.

The gently contoured form of the figures in *Christ and the Woman of Samaria*, as well as the handling of their garments, which reveal rather than conceal their bodies, and the idealization of their features, suggests that by this time Meštrović was looking to classical Greek art. The transparent garments of a Roman copy of a late-fifth-century B.C. sculpture of Aphrodite (*"Venus Genitrix"*), for example, cling to the figure's body (fig. 33). Meštrović might also have been looking to classical Greek relief for compositional solutions and interesting poses. In a late-fifth-century relief from the temple of Athena Nike, the goddess lifts her leg up and bends forward at the waist to untie her sandal. Though Christ's pose is less exaggerated, it is reminiscent of Athena's in the Greek temple relief. Although the 1927 reliefs demonstrate a greater interest in classical than archaic Greek sculpture, the well-defined figures nonetheless demonstrate Mestrovic's continued commitment to creating clear and stable form.

Hildebrand discusses relief largely in terms of Greek relief, and specifically for its ability to create a sense of depth. But he also stresses the importance of maintaining planarity in relief, since it is the relationship between two and three dimensions in relief sculpture that makes relief so significant for him. He describes imagining the figures of relief as if they are between two panes of glass, "in a planar stratum of uniform depth,

and each form tends to spread out along the surface, that is, to make itself recognizable."[117] Further, the "*principal surface* of the relief should not be the rear surface but the *front surface*, which is defined by the high points of the figures." As Hildebrand explains:

> In all stages of relief—from low to high or, more accurately, to deep relief—it is essential that the coherent effect of the surface be forcible expressed. In other words, a sufficient number of elevated points of the representation must lie on the surface to evoke the impression of a surface. If an isolated point noticeably protrudes from this overall surface, it appears to be situated in front of the actual distant plane of our visual field and is excluded from the general movement into depth. It appears to stretch toward us, detached from the overall impression, and we no longer read it from front to back.[118]

The process of direct carving into wood or stone might contribute to successfully creating a relief that emphasizes surface and proceeds accordingly from front to back precisely because of the existence of the surface plane. Rodin's *The Gates of Hell*, once again, stand in stark contrast to Hildebrand's ideas. The Kaštelet reliefs, on the other hand, emphasize surface and establish a clear frontal plane. There is a slight progression into depth, but it is controlled, gradual, and maintains planarity through the movement into three dimensionality.

The Kaštelet reliefs also relate to Hildebrand's theories about the ideal nature of relief in that they create a visual viewing experience. "Relief is based on the impression of a distant image," argues Hildebrand.[119] "When a figure . . . conforms to a single plane, it presents the same repose and clarity that we receive from a clear effect at a greater distance."[120] Hildebrand advocated recreating the effect of viewing at a distance, since this requires fewer movements of the eye and therefore a calming, ideal experience of the

[117] Hildebrand, "The Problem of Form," 251.
[118] Ibid., 254.
[119] Ibid., 253.
[120] Ibid., 257.

visual impression. Likewise, striving for clarity of form reduces the number of eye movements as well as the number of physical movements around the work of art.

Such an approach relates as well to Hildebrand's idea of inherent form and effective form. As noted earlier, though any representation is always understood as effective form because of the subjectivity of the viewing experience and changing environmental factors, creating a clear visual impression composed of well-defined forms brings the representation closer to expressing its inherent form. By working in low relief and expressing his subject in clear and well-defined lines, Meštrović was able to exercise greater control over the effective form of the reliefs. They do not force the viewer to move around them, seeking numerous vantage points, and they do not change dramatically due to environmental factors such as lighting. Hildebrand writes that "shallow relief . . . naturally catches the light all over its surface," while "deep relief . . . is conceived with and for the effects of shadows."[121]

The last of Hildebrand's ideas that applies to the Kaštelet in terms of creating unity, clarity, and ultimately an ideal viewing experience is his emphasis on the vertical and horizontal. Hildebrand argues that "in the two-dimensional all directions are measured and stabilized by the vertical and horizontal dimensions."[122] Further, "There are two basic directions to consider—the vertical and the horizontal. . . . When an image in nature contains these two basic directions . . . it at once conveys to us the restful feeling of clear spatial relations."[123] The reliefs at the Kaštelet, with a few exceptions, such as *Deposition*, are built compositionally on the vertical and horizontal, displaying either a few tall figures that emphasize the verticality of the wood panel, or, as in

[121] Ibid., 255.
[122] Ibid., 252.
[123] Ibid., 249.

*Madonna with Angels*, a horizontal arrangement of figures. In *Christ and the Woman of Samaria*, both directions are articulated. Christ and the woman provide the vertical, while the horizontal construction of the well grounds the composition.

The strong verticals and horizontals found within the reliefs echo their surroundings: tall and slender figures correspond to the walls of the church and the upward reaching arms of Christ on the apse crucifix. Horizontal repetitions of figures, meanwhile, relate to the arrangement of the reliefs along the walls (and to the movement of the viewer through the interior space of the church). The reliefs unify the entire architectural space in their placement and figural compositions, creating a meditative, calming space for viewing and reflection. As Hildebrand writes, "[F]igures that are designed so that they give a clear appearance will clarify and make tangible the entire space for which they are conceived."[124]

[124] Ibid., 258.

## Imagination, Nature, Figuration: Further Reflections on the Ideas of Meštrović and Hildebrand

In *The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts*, Hildebrand had discussed two aspects of process: the physical and the intellectual, spiritual, or imaginative—the artist's conception. The imagination takes on dual roles in the realm of art, being both shaped by artistic representation and process and an active participant in the realization of a work of art. The purpose of art, according to Hildebrand, is to forge and make tangible the relationship between the imagination and the senses, but it is precisely the imagination that drives art-making.[125] Ideally, the sculptor does not improvise, but imagines the complete sculpture even before cutting into the stone block, beginning with the visualization of one side of the sculpture and letting the others arrange themselves naturally in accordance with the first.

Then, the sculptor may begin working in stone, beginning with the main surface of the stone and allowing a sculpture in the round to emerge naturally from the other faces. If the idea is properly conceived, the stone will begin to melt away, guided by the imagination, which continually holds in the artist's mind the total visual image. Reciprocally, the emerging form stimulates the imagination, and the visual image becomes increasingly clearer in the artist's mind, allowing the gradual and unified creation of depth and exposure of the sculpture. Hildebrand likens his process to that of Michelangelo, who "characteristically described this process of working in marble when he said that one must think of the work as an image submerged in water, which gradually

[125] Ibid., 270.

recedes so that the figure emerges above the surface little by little until it is completely free."[126]

For Meštrović, the conception of a work of art was perhaps the most important part of the artistic process. In his 1925 essay "Michelangelo," in which he writes about his feelings and observations in relation to Michelangelo's work, he describes in detail the conceptual artistic process, which actually begins "in its first germ," before the "creative impulse appears in its author."[127] The germ then grows internally during a period which may be short or may last for several years: "In the first stage it is anticipated, in the second it is felt and seen with the inward eye, in the third it is realized and reveals itself to the material senses."[128] Then, in a passage that bears a striking resemblance to that of Hildebrand, Meštrović outlines the importance of the imagination:

> Those other eyes, which in this case are called imagination, have the final work continually before them, even though it is invisible to these eyes of ours, because it still has no form . . . . [T]he sculptor has in front of him his block of stone or wood, or whatever it may be, and sees in it the figure he wants to carve, even before he has touched the block with his chisel and it bears the faintest resemblance to the future work. . . . [I]t is now merely a question of the statue throwing off its veil of matter and standing exposed to the light.[129]

Meštrović describes a similar experience in memoirs written while in his seventies, reflecting upon his relationship with Zátková, the Czech artist who drew the

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[126] Ibid., 273.

[127] Ivan Meštrovic, "Michelangelo," trans. Robert William Seton-Watson, *The Slavonic Review* 5, No. 14 (1926): 229. Little of Meštrović's published writing pertains directly to his art. Published writing in Croatian includes V*atra i opekline: Ružena, Ruža, Klara* (Zagreb: Dora Krupićeva, 1998), *Uspomene na Političke Ljude i Dogadjaje*, and *Razgovari s Michelangelom* (Zagreb: Školska Knjiga, 2007). In addition to "Michelangelo," published writing in English includes "By Way of a Preface," in *Meštrović*, compiled by Ivan Meštrović, Joza Kljaković, and Milan Ćurčin (Zagreb: Nova Evropa,1933), n.p. Archives at the University of Notre Dame, Syracuse University, the Meštrović Gallery in Split, the Meštrović Atelier in Zagreb, and the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences Archive of Fine Arts (Arhiv za Likovne Umjetnosti) in Zagreb hold additional material.

[128] Ibid., 230.

[129] Ibid.

sketch of his work as a series of concentric squares (fig. 12). Meštrović recalled the sculpture he was working on at the time of their meeting in 1911 in Rome:

> In my dream I had seen the statue completely finished to the last detail. I saw it three dimensionally and from all sides at the same time. Once this happened it was easy for me to complete a statue in my own studio. It seemed to me that at this point I was only copying a figure which had already been completed, as a student copies a statue made by a master. I felt completely sure of myself, serenely calm and so exhilarated that I started humming softly to myself, as I often did when I felt good and my work progressed easily.[130]

Mate Meštrović confirms his father's tendency to gain a clear conception of a work of art before beginning to physically create it:

> My father told me that some times, even before he started working on a statue, he would see it completed, three-dimensionally in his dream. When undertaking to make a major work my father would make drawings, then small renditions in clay (which were later cast in plaster, and often in bronze). Once he started modeling the full-sized statue in clay, he worked very fast, I suppose, because he knew precisely in advance what he was creating. It would be like an author who had the finished text of his book in his head, before even starting to put it on paper.[131]

Of his work until 1933 Meštrović wrote that most of it was notes, studies, and preparations, and that for this reason, he believed his greatest sculpture to be in the cliffs, unrealized.[132] Such a sentiment calls to mind the *Kosovo Temple*, of which only "fragments" and studies for the larger work remain. It was an impossible project from its conception, and thus, despite Meštrović's devotion to it, it remained suspended in a state of perpetual conception.

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[130] This passage is from an unpublished translation by Mate Meštrović, reproduced in Joseph E. O'Connor, "'Vatra i Pepeo': The Unpublished Memoirs of Ivan Meštrović," *Journal of Croatian Studies* 24 (1983). Electronic edition by *Studia Croatica*, accessed August 6, 2011, http://www.studiacroatica.org/jcs/24/2408.htm. In an email message to the author on June 18, 2011, Mate Meštrović confirmed this translation. These memoirs are published in Croatian as *Vatra i opekline*. See note 126.

[131] Mate Meštrović, email message to author, June 18, 2011.

[132] Ivan Meštrović, Joza Kljaković, and Milan Ćurčin. *Meštrović* (Zagreb: Nova Evropa, 1933), n.p.

Far from lamenting unfinished work, however, Meštrović revered it, and, like Hildebrand, he found a parallel in the work of Michelangelo:

> In his 'unfinished' work he has left to us all the greatness of his creative power, which is far greater than all of his perfection of craft. Those unfinished Titans of his ('The Slaves')—still half wrapt in matter—stand before us as strong and great as he saw them with those other eyes, before he began to draw them out of their material shell. It is the moment when the spirit is strongest and most concentrated in action: in these unfinished figures Michelangelo has put that moment into stone for us, for all time.[133]

Meštrović often attempted to replicate this effect, as with *Widow* (1908), the sculpture of a woman emerging from stone that, in its varied textured marks, alludes to the sculptor's gradual process of freeing the figure from stone. Several of Meštrović's sculptures explore the idea of the emerging figure and of the evolution from relief to sculpture, but *Caryatid's Head* (1934) is the most suggestive of the sculptural process of Michelangelo described by Hildebrand in *The Problem of Form* (fig. 34). In the center of a rough granite block, the polished features of a woman emerge as though the block is slowly melting away to reveal the hidden likeness within.

To create representational work was important to both sculptors, and both stressed the relationship between nature and artistic representation and nature's role in constructing spatial understanding. For Hildebrand, the importance of the relationship between nature, space, and artistic representation lies in our complex relationship with space and how we perceive it:

> Since we do not view nature simply as visual beings tied to a single vantage point but, rather, with all our senses at once, in perpetual change and motion, we live and weave a spatial consciousness into the nature that surrounds us, even where the appearance before us offers scarcely any point of reference for the idea of space.[134]

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[133] Meštrović, "Michelangelo," 235-236.
[134] Hildebrand, "The Problem of Form," 239.

Thus, nature is necessary to and conditions our spatial understanding.

Interestingly, for both Meštrović and Hildebrand, nature assumes an active role in the process of artistic representation. It is not merely something to be copied, but actually produces form to be represented. Hildebrand suggests thinking of nature as "something that gives form to space," and so, "the parallel between nature and the work of art, therefore, is not to be sought in the equality of their actual appearances but rather in the fact they have the same capacity for evoking an idea of space."[135] This is significant because, for Hildebrand, artistic representation is concerned precisely with effectively evoking a sense of space, and this is also the "most elementary effect of nature."[136]

Meštrović made a comparable statement in a 1925 letter to Henry Goddard Leach, editor of *The Forum* (New York) for inclusion in a debate between Walter Pach, Elie Nadelman, and Katherine Dreier, among others, about whether or not cubism is pure art: "Art is not a copy of nature but it is in a sense its equivalent. Art creates its forms according to the same laws of harmony by which nature also creates its forms, and therefore the forms both are similar but not the same."[137] The two quotations strike the same chord: that the significance of the relationship between art and nature is not in similarity of appearance, but in how the appearance is created (through laws of harmony) and the effect of the appearance (to create form, and therefore evoke an idea of space). For both Meštrović and Hildebrand, the space around an artwork is just as important and

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[135] Ibid., 242.
[136] Ibid., 239.
[137] Ivan Meštrović in "Pure Art? or 'Pure Nonsense'?: Nine Selected Letters from Our Readers," *The Forum* 74, No. 1 (July 1925): 149. For the articles that sparked the debate, see Walter Pach, "Picasso's Achievement," and Alfred Vance Churchill, "Picasso's Failure," *The Forum* 73, No. 6 (June 1925): 769-783.

intrinsic to the object as the final perceived form. For Hildebrand, it is the implied presence of the now-absent block around a sculpture—the preservation of cubic form—that creates unity and a feeling of clear spatial relations.

In a complex and somewhat enigmatic passage from "Michelangelo," Meštrović writes:

> The men of the pen are seldom capable of seeing what is behind and above the works, or that which lies on the other side of them, and to which the artist has more or less succeeded in imparting a material form. They simply lack the sense which would enable them to feel this: they lack the torch of fantasy by which, through the work before them, they might kindle in it that original something which was before its author as he worked.[138]

It is unclear whether the "what" Meštrović refers to—that which is above and behind the works—is physical or conceptual. Likely, it is both. On one hand, he seems to be referring to the space created by the absence of the physical block, which the artist has given form to precisely by forming material. On the other hand, he seems to be hinting at a certain presence that emanates from the sculpture, something akin to a soul or a spirit, given to the object through the very act of artistic conception and later through the process of artistic creation. Indeed, for Meštrović a work of art is successful, "harmonious, perfect" when it achieves a balance between its material, or visual, and spiritual, or invisible, aspects.[139] For Hildebrand, a work of art is successful when it places the viewer in a secure relationship with nature, clarifying form and spatial relations and promoting a calm and clear viewing experience.

This relates to Meštrović's adherence to figurative art rather than experimenting with non-representational art. At the time Zátková's sketch symbolized the geometric

[138] Meštrović, "Michelangelo," 225.
[139] Ibid., 229.

substructure of his sculpture, artists such as the French Cubists were just beginning to emphasize geometry itself in art. In a development neither Zátková nor Mestrovic could have imagined, the Russian Kazimir Malevich would exhibit a black square on a white ground in 1915. Thus, it is not surprising that in his letter addressing the question of cubism, Meštrović insists that art always expresses itself by means of forms existing in nature, and not by abstract schemes. He agrees that while the artist may reduce forms to emphasize what is essential he should not completely renounce recognizable forms, lest they become "mere mathematical or geometrical diagrams . . . which have in themselves nothing artistic, but are interesting only in the thought which they express."[140] Looking to Michelangelo, whom he admired so much, and whom Hildebrand praised for making "a pure image so that all distinctions of time, circumstances, and individuality are reduced to nothing before the universal and eternal laws that govern and always will govern artistic creation," Meštrović himself desired to create a timeless art, accessible to all in form and figuration.[141]

[140] Ivan Meštrović in "Pure Art? or 'Pure Nonsense'?," 149.
[141] Hildebrand, "The Problem of Form," 278.

## Conclusion

Meštrović spent the first few decades of the twentieth century traveling and living throughout Europe. He enjoyed widespread recognition for his creative work as well as his political activism as a member of the Yugoslav Committee in London during World War I. During the interwar period he spent time in Zagreb and Split, making several trips to Belgrade, where he developed a relationship with King Alexander I of Yugoslavia.

Meštrović lived fairly peacefully in Croatia until 1941, when he was imprisoned for three months for refusing an invititation to visit Hitler. Had the Vatican not intervened on his behalf, his internment might have lasted much longer. After World War II Meštrović spent time in exile in Italy and Switzerland, refusing to live in a communist country despite Tito's invitations to return to Yugoslavia, until he accepted a professorship in 1946 at Syracuse University in New York. The Metropolitan Museum of Art celebrated Meštrović with an exhibition of his artwork in 1947, a particular honor since the museum had not previously shown the work of a living artist. After nine years at Syracuse, Meštrović relocated once more to South Bend, Indiana, where he taught sculpture at Notre Dame University until his death in 1962. Today, though a popular and celebrated figure in Croatia, he is largely unrecognized in the United States.

In a 1983 article investigating Meštrović's time in Vienna, Michael Mulnix typically emphasizes his peasant roots—and he seems even to blame them for Meštrović's artistic development (or lack thereof) and possibly even for his short-lived fame:

> Had he followed the path Klimt blazed, Meštrović would never have been able to return home—literally and figurativelly [sic]. He was a peasant, with a peasant's view of the world. He was not cosmopolitan, as was Klimt. . . . Rather than feeling alienated from his past, Meštrović felt united with it. The esoteric works

> being produced by the modernists began to run contrary to his entire philosophical orientation, one which had deep roots in the history and culture of his native Croatia. Although Meštrović adopted some of the stylistic tools employed in the age, he remained stubbornly classical in his outlook. His goal was to herald in a new era in sculpture, but one anchored firmly in the traditions of the past.[142]

Mulnix had part of it right, at least. Meštrović did feel united with his past—he never sought to break from it, as did many of his contemporaries, and, unlike them, he never felt the urge to produce "esoteric" works. However, he was not merely a "peasant, with a peasant's view of the world," nor did his peasant roots keep him from engaging with theoretical and philosophical developments. Though Meštrović might have been a man of few words, he was also a man of deep thought. His writings about art, though few, reveal significant concerns with how art functions, what it does, and how it does it. Meštrović had very clear ideas about his own artistic production and consciously drew from a variety of sources to construct his own style and a personal philosophy about art.

It seems very likely that Adolf von Hildebrand's *The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts* was among these sources. Their work was very different, with Hildebrand's more classical and academic and Meštrović's reinterpreting the past with a distinctive stylization. Nevertheless, Meštrović and Hildebrand found common ground in their ideas about art and artistic production. Much of Meštrović's sculpture reveals significant concerns with process, form, space, and overall unity. The *Kosovo Pavilion*, the *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*, and the Kaštelet in particular investigate the relationship between sculpture and architecture, seeking to create harmony and unity by clarifying form.

This thesis has offered another avenue for thinking about Meštrović's work and artistic development that gives fuller consideration to his stylistic and philosophical

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[142] Michael Mulnix, "Meštrović in Vienna," *Journal of Croatian Studies* 24 (1983). Electronic edition by *Studia Croatica*, accessed August 6, 2011, http://www.studiacroatica.org/jcs/24/2404.htm.

development. Instead of focusing primarily on his freestanding sculpture, it has aimed to open up discussions about Meštrović the architect and theorist, providing new interpretations of his architectural sculpture. This is a particularly fruitful area of his work to consider in terms of the aesthetic theory that was so significant for early twentieth-century artists. Cast in a new light, Meštrović's work appears less "rooted in the past" and, instead, fully engaged with twentieth-century concerns about art-making, art-viewing, and how these activities relate the perceivable world.

## Figures

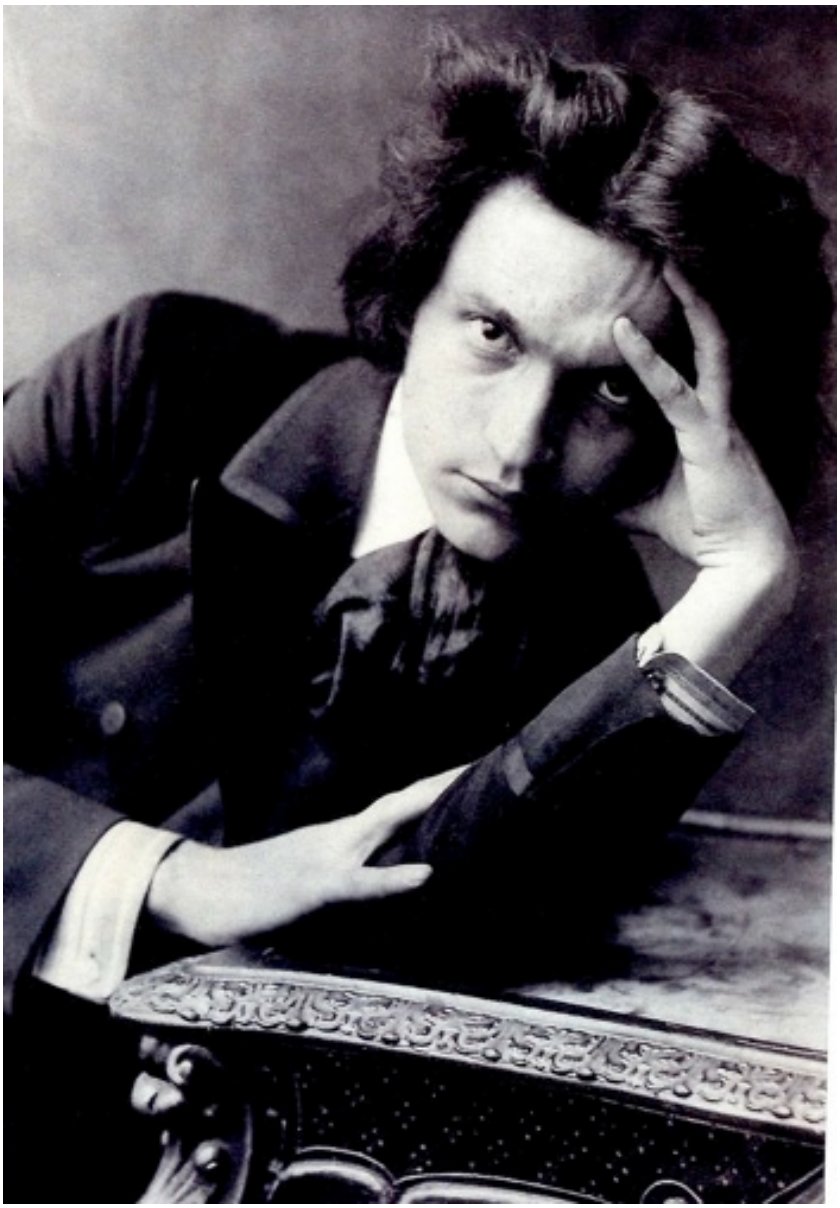

Figure 1. Ivan Meštrović in 1905, Vienna. From Danica Plazibat, *From Home to Museum: Ivan Meštrović in Zagreb*, pg. 22.

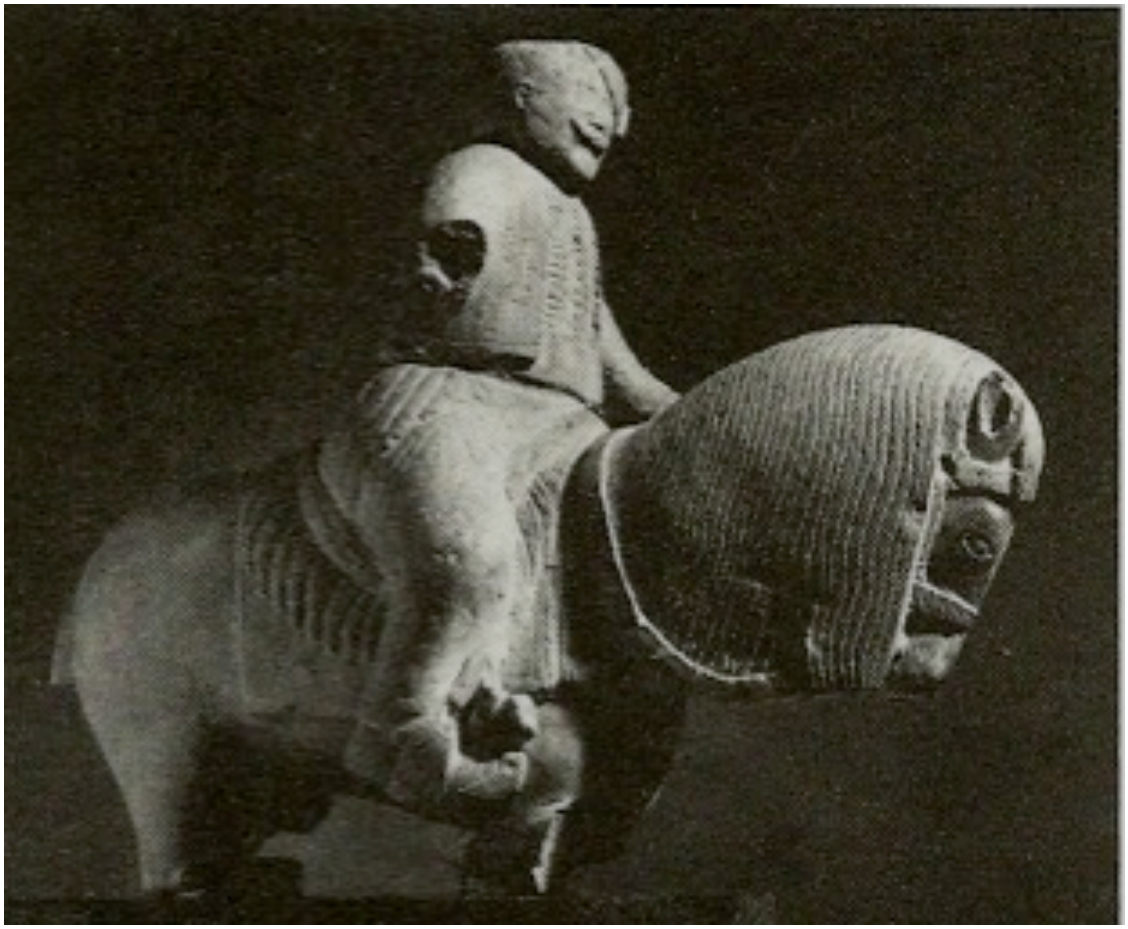

Figure 2. Ivan Meštrović, *Bosnian on a Horse*, 1898. Stone. From Božo Bek, ed., *Ivan Meštrović, 1882-1962: Centennial Exhibition*, pg. 15.

Figure 3. Otto Wagner, Kirche St. Leopold am Steinhof, 1905-1907, Vienna. Photograph by Wayne Andrews, ARTstor Online.

Figure 4. Friedrich Ohmann, *Palmenhaus*, 1901-1905, Vienna. From http://www.ohmann.cc.

Figure 5. Auguste Rodin, *The Gates of Hell*, 1880-1900. Bronze. From Erich Lessing Culture and Fine Arts Archives, ARTstor Online.

Figure 6. Ivan Meštrović, *Well of Life*, 1905. Bronze. Zagreb, Croatia. From Plazibat, *From Home to Museum*, pg. 29.

Figure 7. Vienna Secession Exhibition (1906) with plaster cast for *Well of Life*. From Plazibat, *From Home to Museum*, pg. 29.

Figure 8. August Rodin, *Crouching Woman*, 1882-82. Bronze. Philadelphia Museum of Art. From DASE Online, University of Texas at Austin.

Figure 9. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Awakening Slave*, c. 1516-1519. Marble. Galleria dell'Accademia. From Scala Archives, ARTstor Online.

Figure 10. Ivan Meštrović, *Girl Singing*, 1906, bronze. Meštrović Gallery. From Igor Maroević et al., *Ivan Meštrović Gallery*, pg. 93, fig. 5.

Figure 11. Ivan Meštrović, *Widow*, 1908. Marble. From Duško Kečkemet, *Ivan Meštrović*, pl. 66.

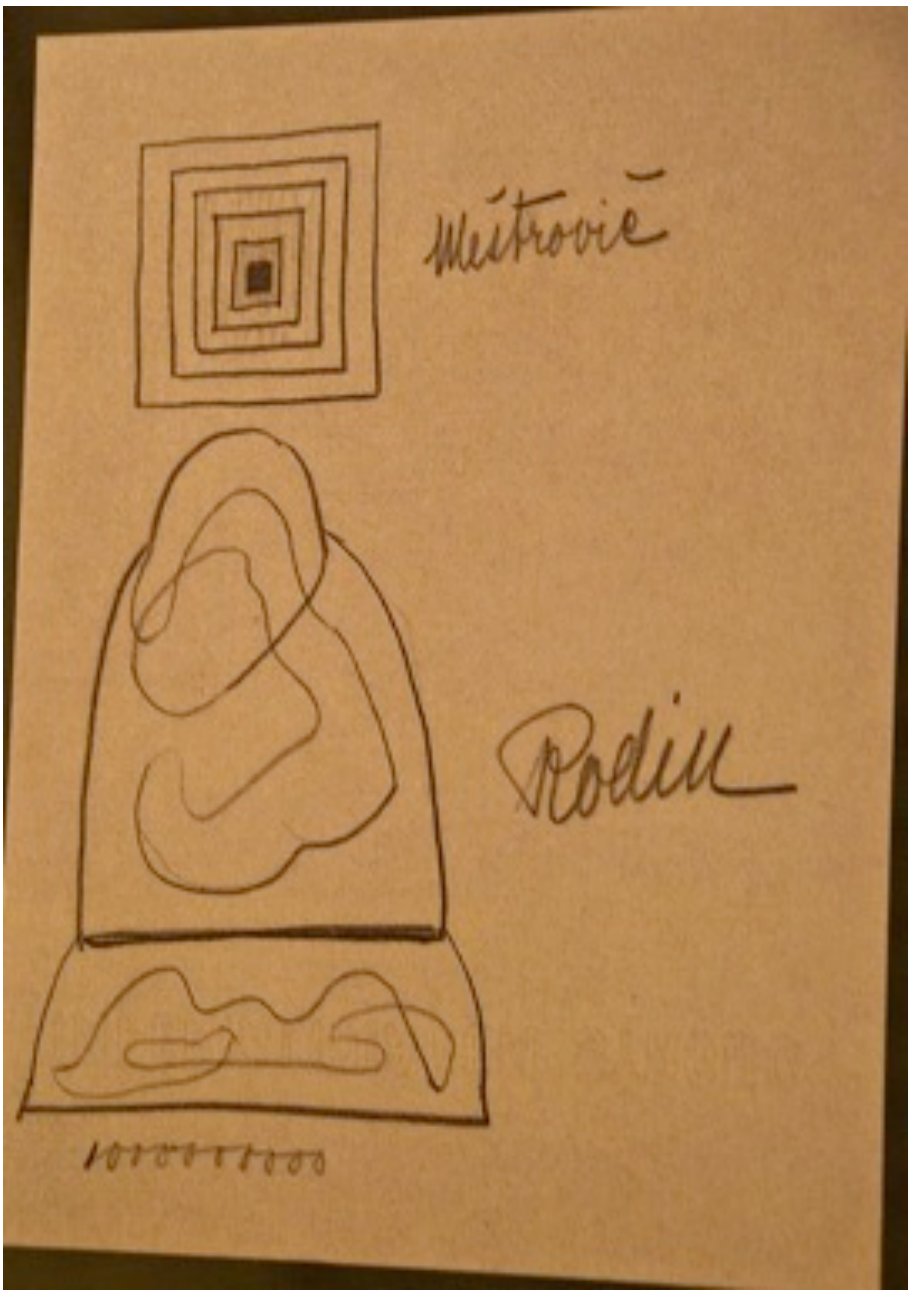


Figure 12. Ružena Zátková, sketch, c. 1911. On view in the exhibition "Ružena: Story of the Painter Ružena Zátková" at the Imperial Stables of Prague Castle, April 7, 2011-July 31, 2011. Photograph courtesy of Maya Lucchitta, great granddaughter of Zátková.

Figure 13. Athena, central figure from the west pediment of the Temple of Aphaia, Aegina, c. 500-490 B.C. Marble. Glyptothek, Munich. From Art History Survey Collection, ARTstor Online.

Figure 14. Ivan Meštrović, *Caryatids*, "Fragments" of the *Kosovo Temple*, c. 1908. From Ivan Meštrović, Joza Kljaković, and Milan Ćurčin *Meštrović*, fig. 4.

Figure 15. Kore from the Cheramyes Group, c. 570-560 B.C. Marble. Musée du Louvre.

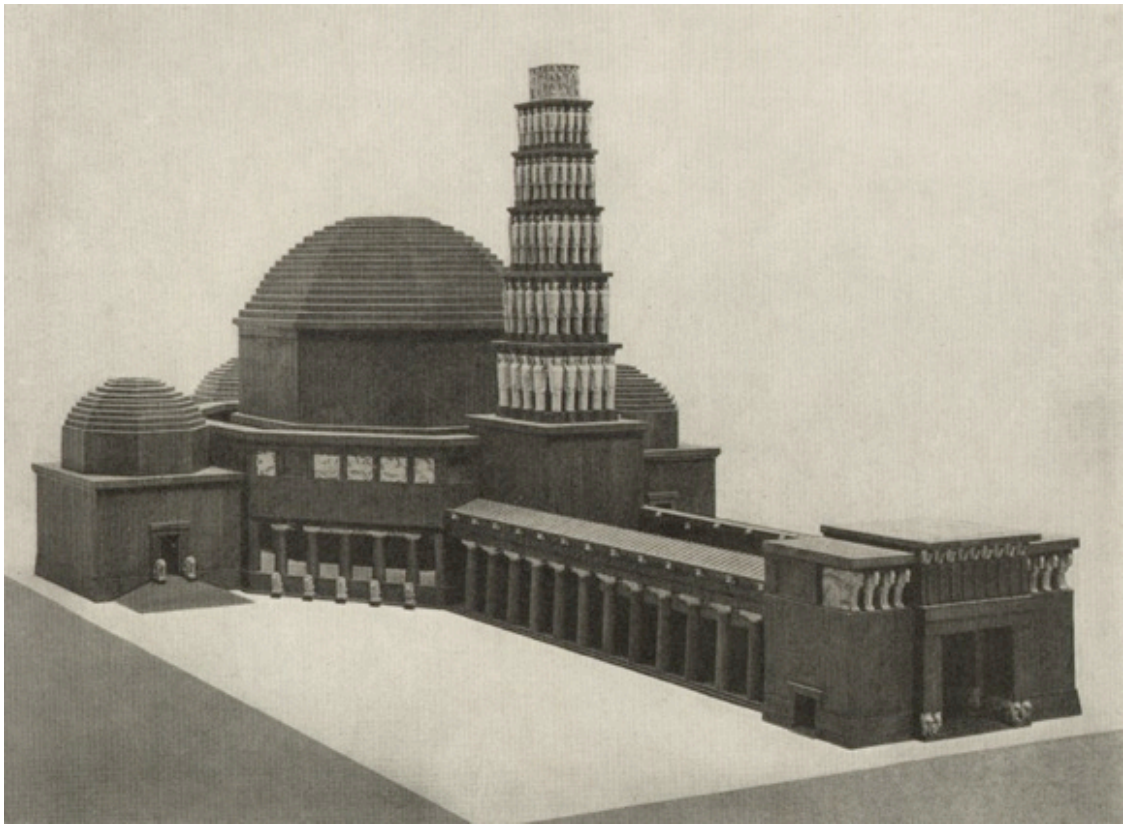

Figure 16. Ivan Meštrović, *Kosovo Temple*, wooden model, c. 1910.

Figure 17. Assyrian Gallery in the Louvre Museum, c. 1924. From Pottier, *Catalogue des Antiquités Assyriennes*, pl. 1.

Figure 18. Friedrich Ohmann, Meran Kurhaus, 1911-1913. From http://www.ohmann.cc.


Figure 19. Serbian Pavilion, Rome, 1911. From Jovo Simišić, "Kosovo Myth and Serbian Art Before Eyes of Europe," http://www.jat.com.

Figure 20. Ivan Meštrović, *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*, 1938. Black granite. Mount Avala, Serbia. From ARTstor Online.

Figure 21. Aristide Maillol, *Desire*, 1906-1908. Tinted plaster. From The Museum of Modern Art collection, ARTstor Online.

Figure 22. Antoine Bourdelle, *The Dance*, 1912, bronze. Relief for Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. From Rather, *Archaism, Modernism, and the Art of Paul Manship*, pg. 66, fig. 36.

Figure 23. Ivan Meštrović, *Girl Dancer*, 1912. Marble. From Igor Maroević et al., *Ivan Meštrović Gallery Permanent Exhibition Guide*, pg. 89, fig. 1.

Figure 24. Ivan Meštrović, Kaštelet interior with reliefs and crucifix, 1916-1953. Split, Croatia. Photograph by the author.

Figure 25. Ivan Meštrović, *Christ Driving the Money Changers from the Temple*, 1917. Wood. Split, Croatia. Photograph courtesy of Paul Bartholomew.

Figure 26. Servant leading royal chariot horses, Assyrian relief. From Pottier, *Catalogue des Antiquités Assyriennes*, pl. 38.

Figure 27. Egon Schiele, *Standing Girl in Plaid Garment* (detail), 1908-09. Charcoal and body color. The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. From Fischer, *Egon Schiele, 1890-1918: Desire and Decay*, pg. 21.

Figure 28. Ivan Meštrović, *Deposition*, 1917. Wood. Split, Croatia. Photograph by the author.

Figure 29. Ivan Meštrović, *Temptation of Christ*, 1917. Wood. Split, Croatia. Photograph courtesy of Paul Bartholomew.

Figure 30. Ivan Meštrović, *Madonna with Angels*, 1917. Wood. Split, Croatia. Photograph by the author.

Figure 31. Ivan Meštrović, *Annunciation*, 1927. Wood. Split, Croatia. Photograph courtesy of Paul Bartholomew.

Figure 32. Ivan Meštrović, *Christ and the Woman of Samaria*, 1927. Wood. Split, Croatia. Photograph courtesy of Paul Bartholomew.

Figure 33. Aphrodite ("Venus Genitrix"), late-first/early-second century Roman copy of a late-fifth century B.C. Greek original. Marble. Musée du Louvre.

Figure 34. Ivan Meštrović, *Caryatid's Head*, 1934. Red granite. From Kečkemet, *Ivan Meštrović*, pl. 58.

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